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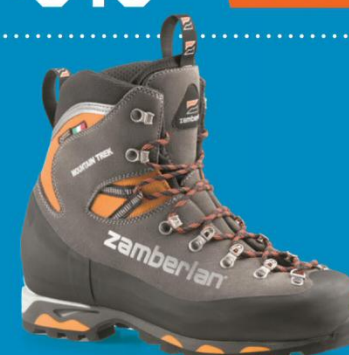


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# Contents July 2020

## FEATURES

**12 How lost people can make themselves seen**  
Expert advice from a rescuer who helped find two trampers missing in Kahurangi National Park

**18 The Kaimango Road angels**  
Hundreds of trampers have enjoyed warmth and hospitality on Waikato's Kaimango Road

**34 The missing mountain man**  
Tracing the last steps of the Reverend William Murray who disappeared on Mt Taranaki in 1923

**44 Climbing out of the comfort zone**  
With a guide calling the shots, a longtime trampster finds his first mountain climb a scary yet satisfying experience

**50 War of the wildings**  
How can we turn the tide in the war against exotic wilding conifers?

## REGULARS

**4 Editorial**

**6 Pigeon post**  
Letters to the editor

**8 Last weekend**  
What did you get up to last weekend?

**10 Walkshorts**  
News from the wild

**14 Near miss**  
Trying to cross a river to reach the loo was nearly this trampster's undoing

**16 Wild people**  
Roger Parsons is your typical septuagenarian trampster who also happens to hike long-distance trails

**74 Track Chat**  
Richard Riddiford discusses long-standing angst between Sir Edmund Hillary and his dad in the documentary, Before Everest

**Cover:** Explore Taranaki on p34.  
**Photo:** Lan Zhang

44



## WAYPOINTS AND TRIPS

**22 See more... silver beech forest**  
Where to explore the mossy majesty of a silver beech forest

**24 Turning up the volume**  
Okere Falls Loop Track, Rotorua

**26 Constant beauty**  
Lake Constance, Nelson Lakes National Park

**28 A top-of-the-world Travers**  
Travers Peak, Lewis Pass National Reserve

**29 Across the lion's back**  
Te Whara Track, Bream Head Scenic Reserve

**30 Patriarch of the Kahurangi**  
Mt Patriarch via Chummies Track, Kahurangi National Park

**32 Crossing off an icon**  
Tongariro Alpine Crossing, Tongariro National Park

**40 For the love of gold**  
Riding an old gold trail on the Waiuta to Big River Track

55



66



62



## SKILLS

**54 Navigation**  
Understanding track markers

**55 Wild cuisine**  
Not mince on toast

**56 Wild skills**  
First aid kit essentials

## GEAR

**58 My first tent**  
How one trampster made sure he chose the right tent

**60 What's in my pack**  
Federated Mountain Clubs president, Jan Finlayson, shows us what she packs

**61 Broken in**  
Wilderness staff and gear reviewers test their kit for you

**62 Wild review**  
Three overnight packs tested

## GEAR GUIDES

**64** 2020's best outdoor socks

**66** 2020's best fleece jackets and tops

**68** 2020's best skiing and alpine packs

**70** 2020's best alpine boots



## EDITORIAL



## NEW ZEALAND CONDITIONS

**DURING LOCKDOWN**, I interviewed Ieva Laucina, a young Latvian who had walked the South Island with a ridiculously light pack with a base weight (without food and water) of 6.3kg.

Not to be outdone, this month I caught up with Roger Parsons (see p16) – another South Island Te Araroa Trail walker – who sits at the other end of the age spectrum. Now 75, Parsons walked the South Island section when he was 71. He's got dreams of one day walking the North Island section from Cape Reinga to Auckland.

Like Laucina, Parsons packs light. His goal is to tramp with less than 10kg, including food and water – any more and he reckons his pack wouldn't be able to cope. And nor, he says, could his body. He wants to keep tramping and doing the kind of multi-day trips he's done all his life and he can't do that with a heavy pack.

Traditionally in New Zealand, trampers have been content with their heavy-weight storm gear, tents and packs. The argument goes that unlike in continental Europe or in North America, New Zealand's weather is much wetter and more fickle – it's liable to change at a moment's notice. And our trails are much rougher, with dense bush that can scratch, scrape and poke gear. This is all true and it adds up to what is colloquially known as 'New Zealand conditions'. The reasoning goes, if you want your gear to survive – if *you* want to survive – then you need the toughest (i.e. heaviest) gear available.

So New Zealanders, despite living in an outdoor paradise, have been much slower to adapt to lightweight tramping like Europeans and North Americans. 'New Zealand conditions' is a phrase still bandied about in warning to those perceived to be packing too light. It's mostly used to criticise foreigners who 'obviously don't know what they're getting themselves into'.

But I think it's about time to retire the phrase when used to assess the contents of someone else's pack. These days, gear is so much better than it once was. It's not only lighter but in some cases it can also be stronger, warmer and more weatherproof. Weather forecasting is also better, so we can be pretty sure of the conditions we're going to get – though of course you can never become complacent.

And there's also the crucial element of experience. The more time you spend outdoors using your kit, the better you are at evaluating its performance and the conditions it can be used in.

Buy the gear that makes you happy and that helps you enjoy your time outdoors – if that's a 20kg or 10kg pack, that's fine. Use your gear in the conditions, and in the way it was designed for and you can't go far wrong. Roger Parsons and Ieva Laucina have proved that

- Alistair Hall

**August issue update:** We're nearly back to our regular publishing schedule, but still need at least two issues to get there. That means the August issue will be published on July 27.

### E-newsletter

To get the latest in outdoor news, gear and the latest trip recommendations head to our website and sign up to the Wilderness Weekly newsletter



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GOOD ADVICE

Earlier this year I was considering walking an upper South Island tramp. Settling on the St James Walkway, I searched the Internet for likely access onto the tops from the valleys. Discovering mention of a route onto the Libretto Range from Boyle Flats Hut, a plan started to take shape. Then, glancing out the window and seeing the postie, I took a break from the computer and wandered to the mailbox. There was the February issue of Wilderness. As is my habit when the magazine arrives, I made a cuppa and settled down to read.

And there it was! Pat Barrett's description of Mt Faust, complete with confirmation of the route from Boyle Flats and exit to the car park. Plan complete.

The weather delivered. We had a pleasant walk around the St James Walkway, culminating in an absolutely glorious exit over Mt Faust to the car.

All too soon we were back home in Covid-19 lockdown. Nobody was able to get into the hills. However, *Wilderness* still arrived, giving much inspiration and motivation to plan future trips.

Thank you, Wilderness.

- Sandra Rowland, Email



We're pleased you had a successful trip Sandra – talk about timing! Sandra receives a single-person Kiwi Camping Pukeko Hiker tent worth \$229 from [www.kiwicamping.co.nz](http://www.kiwicamping.co.nz). Readers, send your letter to the editor to win.

RESPECTING OTHERS

I am firmly Pākehā, my ancestors having arrived in Aotearoa New Zealand some years before the Treaty of Waitangi was signed. I agree totally with the view of Tānia Gaffey ('Why summits are sacred', June 2020).

What those of us who do not share the indigenous cultural worldview often do not understand is that there are times we need to back off, to adopt the view of the other, and quietly respect it. The operative word being 'respect'.

It's actually a simple thing to do.

- Joe Green, email

A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

I wanted to thank and tautoko Tānia Gaffey for her further explanation of the tikanga surrounding maunga.

I also found the initial article 'To summit or not to summit' (April 2020) by Greta Yeoman interesting. I was saddened to hear some of the responses readers had to that article.

I am a fifth-generation Pākehā and Tangata te Tiriti and had not previously learned that summits were sacred to Māori. This knowledge has added to my understanding of Te Ao Māori and will influence my behaviour on future walks.

I also appreciate the deeper connection this knowledge gives me to the whenua.

- Roni Alder, email

BYO FIREWOOD

The article about Spurs Hut ('A magnet drawing the cold and weary', June 2020) had a notable omission: it neglected to mention the complete absence of any type of firewood at the hut as 99 per cent of the area around Spurs Hut is tussock.

My companion and I spent a very cold night there in May 2019. After an hour of searching for firewood, we managed to scrounge enough twigs to have a 30-45 minute small fire which barely took the edge off. We awoke the next morning to our kitchen wash-up water completely frozen.

If anyone is planning on heading to the hut this winter, I recommend they carry their own firewood or gather it as they hike in as there are a couple of areas with some burnable wood.

- Duncan Wilcox, email

SAFETY FIRST

I loved the article 'Te Araroa with a daypack' (May 2020). But there was no mention in the article regarding 'tramping light' from a safety point of view. What safety gear was leva Laucina carrying in her small pack? She did put a lot of thought and planning into her trip though, so all credit to her for doing that.

What made the article so interesting, positive and balanced was the social perspectives of her tramp. The New Zealand wilderness and its conservation is inseparable from our national identity and cultural makeup. I recently spent two weeks on the TA from Cooks Monument to Nelson Lakes and there is no doubt that for 'traditional' trampers' heavy packs can be lightened to ensure a more enjoyable experience. However, safety should never be compromised for those unforgettable memories that go to make up our conservation values.

- Rex Hunt, Richmond

RIVER SAFETY

I have safety concerns regarding the river-crossing photo in 'The Wilderness 100' (May 2020). People may copy what they see modelled and this photo illustrates some aspects that are not considered good practice.

It's great to see that the trampers have kept their boots on and aren't rock hopping. However, in a swift-moving stream it is better (having assessed that it is safe to cross) to use a mutual support method in pairs (or more) rather than to cross solo.

Even correctly placed upstream, one tramping pole can easily break when used in this manner. A better solo crossing practice would be to use two tramping poles held together as one, or a strong wooden pole.

The location being crossed is also a concern – they can't see under the white water and the area where they might fall looks pretty nasty.

- Tim Taylor, Outdoor Training New Zealand

LESSONS RELEARNED

When someone dies in the wilderness, whether from drowning, blunt force trauma or exposure (rarely from starvation), the coroner's report publicly identifies any mistakes that led to the tragedy.

However, when someone is rescued, such an inquiry is not held. When the rescue is lengthy, expensive, with risks to many others but ultimately successful, public euphoria erupts and, perhaps, a few old lessons are relearned.

One such lesson seems clear from the recent rescue of two trampers in Kahurangi National Park; the lucky couple saved themselves \$30 by not hiring a PLB from the Nelson Area Locator Beacon Trust and consequently put their community at great risk and expense. From news media reports, I suspect that they made other mistakes, yet there has been little public discussion of their choices and consequently no lessons publicly relearned.

I guess we just shake our heads in despair and wait for a repeat by others.

- John Walsh, Christchurch

I RETURNED TO THE TRAIL, TOO

My compliments to Nikki Slade Robinson for the article 'Return to the Trail' (April 2020) in which she described returning to tramping after breast cancer surgery. It was also interesting to read Stuart Prattley's letter (May 2020) suggesting that an Aarn pack could be helpful for women in this situation.

Following my surgery, I found the Aarn pack I have used for the past 11 years to be ideal, with the weight being supported by the waistbelt and no pulling on the shoulders. The balance bags are held out from the chest by curved metal stays, meaning there is no pressure on the surgery site. This minimises discomfort and provides a sense of protection. Differential packing of weight or bulk in the pockets may also help with feelings of instability.

Apart from appreciating assistance getting my pack on and off on occasions, I have been able to resume my normal tramping, for example happily completing a five-day circuit of Mt Ruapehu.

- Jean Wilson, Hamilton





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# Your Trips, YOUR PIX

*What did you get up to  
last weekend?*



*Alison Walton  
crossed Broderick  
Pass in snowy  
conditions to reach  
the Huxley Valley*



*Peter Mortimer and John Argyle walked  
The Old Ghost Road on the West Coast*



*Leah and Richie Hart navigated their  
way to Longview Hut, Ruahine Forest Park*



*Vanessa Johnson climbed Waingaro  
Peak in Kahurangi National Park*

*Stacey, Cecilia and Leo Walden  
climbed Mt Hikurangi – the  
North Island's highest non-  
volcanic mountain – and had  
Hikurangi Hut all to themselves*







Lucinda and Samuel Kitching visited Tama Lakes in Tongariro National Park



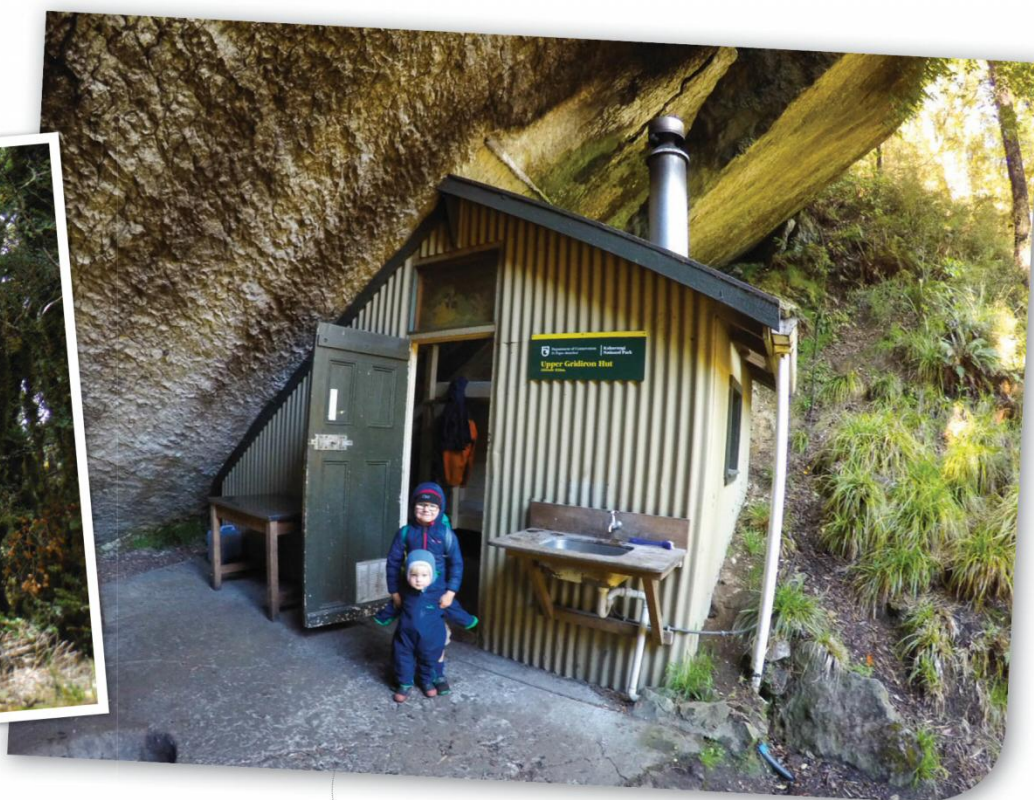
Paul Cashmore and Helen Paul explored the Hopkins Valley



Michelle Wong climbed Breast Hill near Lake Hawea to watch the sunset



Janet Wilson, Roy Rolston, Warren Wheeler and Bruce, the dog, climbed Te Mara Peak in Tararua Forest Park



Mitchell (6) and Oliver MacLachlan (1) visited Gridiron Shelter in Kahurangi National Park

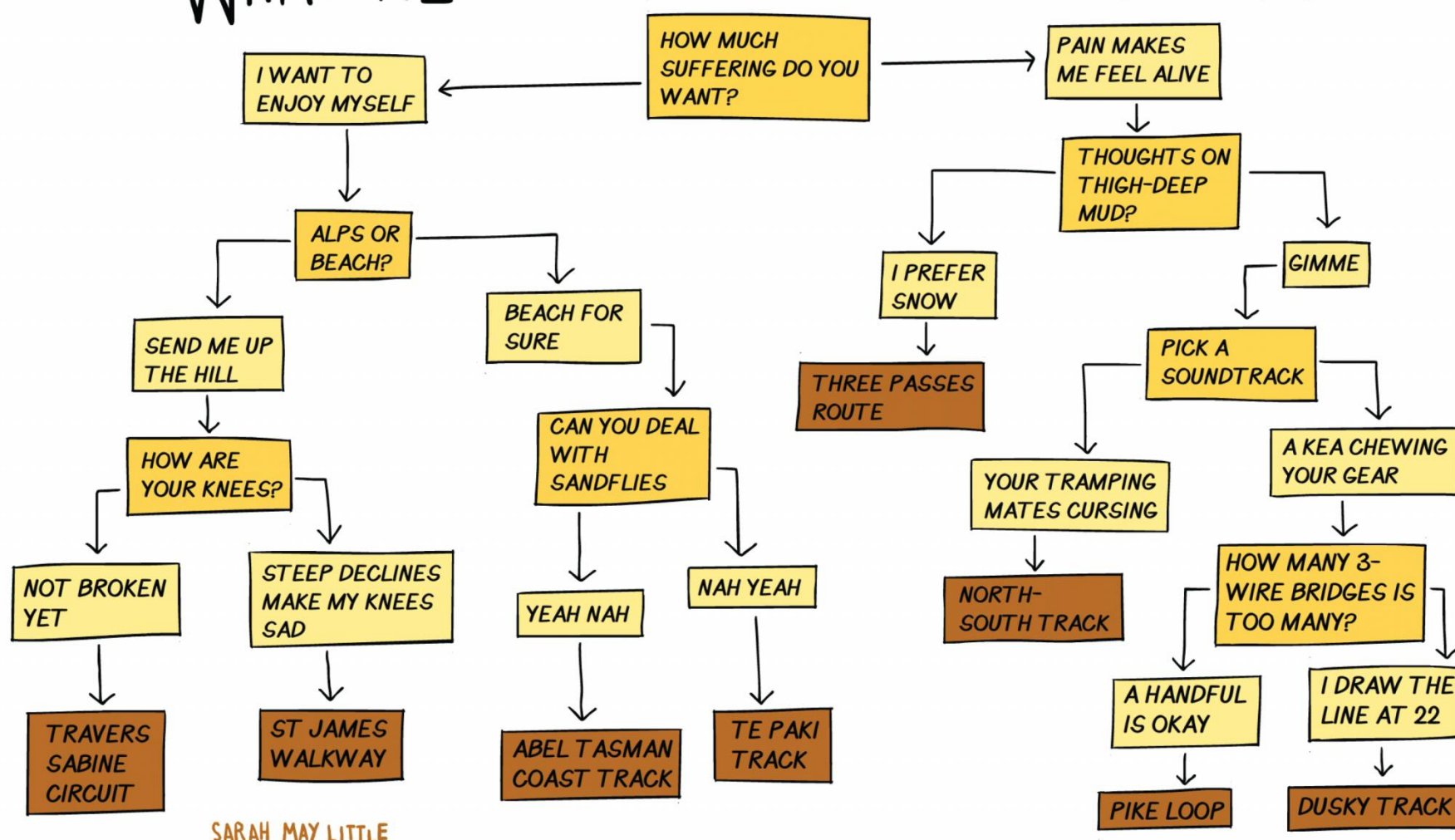


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## WHAT NZ TRACK SHOULD YOU TRAMP?



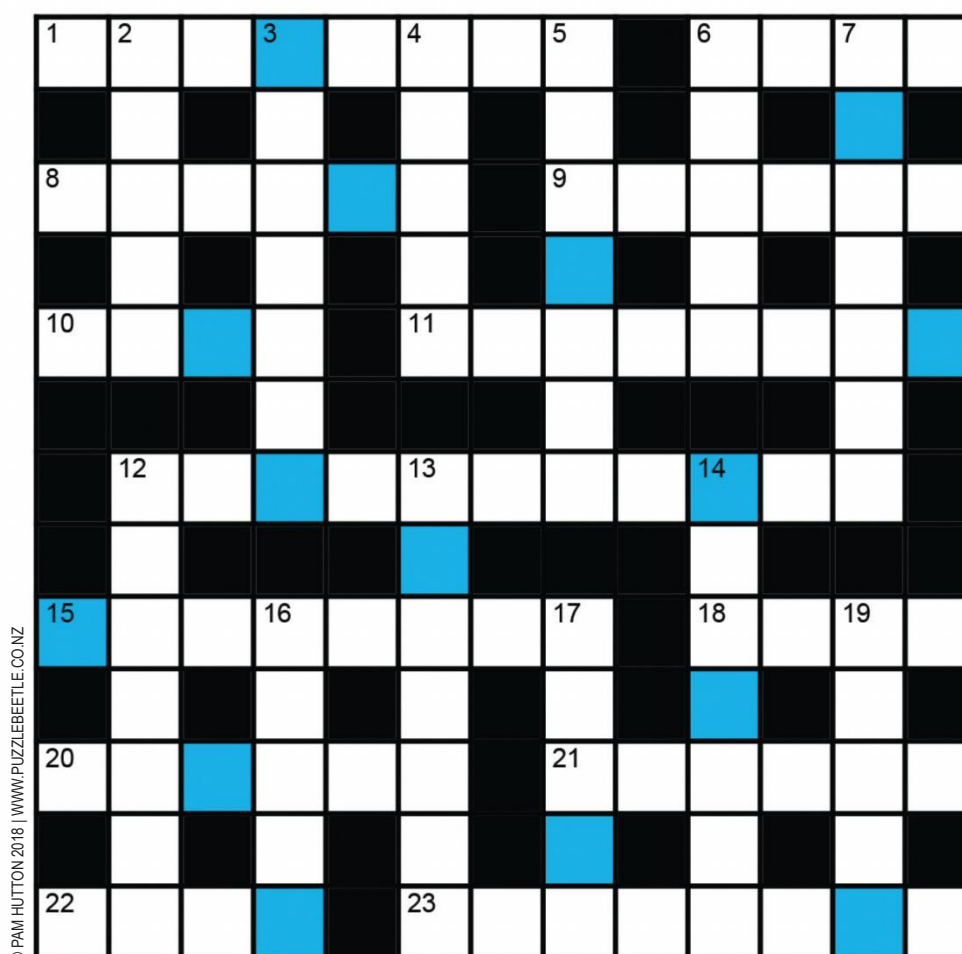
SARAH MAY LITTLE

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WILDERNESS  
WORD

## ACROSS

1. \_\_\_\_\_ River – fast-flowing river in Otago region (8)
6. Hearty camping or tramping meal (4)
8. Remove ties from tramping boots (6)
9. Small natural waterway (6)
10. Large NZ parrot of genus Nestor (4)
11. High-energy snack for trampers (8)
12. Mountain range and valley ski area in north-west Canterbury (11)
15. These can be used to navigate 1 Across (3,5)
18. Small NZ tree also known as Pittosporum crassifolium (4)
20. \_\_\_\_\_ out – supplied with all necessary gear for outdoor adventure (6)
21. Far from civilisation – like real wilderness! (6)
22. Low to moderately fertile wetlands (4)
23. \_\_\_\_\_ sickness – result of oxygen deficiency that can affect mountaineers (8)



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## DOWN

2. \_\_\_\_\_ Ranges – block of hilly country south-east of Auckland (5)
3. NZ lizard-like reptile (7)
4. Panoramic expanses seen from hilltops (5)
5. Protected outdoor sanctuary (7)
6. Small spray of leaves on plant stem (5)
7. Exhilarated happiness at achieving outdoor challenge, eg (7)
12. Long narrow fissure in rock – can be useful for handhold (7)
13. Parasite found in NZ waterways that can cause diarrhoea (7)
14. Untidy and dishevelled – how you look at end of multi-day tramp?! (7)
16. Insect ones can be itchy or sore (5)
17. Herring-like marine fish found in NZ waters (5)
19. Gave ranking to difficulty level of tramping track (5)

**Hidden solution:** Way to beat wilderness chill! (9,6)

**June's hidden solution:** Conservation



## WALKERS PUT OUT BY PAPAROA HUT POPULARITY

Paparoa Track bookings have rekindled frustrations for walkers unable to book the Moonlight Tops Hut.

Fewer than 30 dates between October 1 and April 30 have bunks available in the popular hut, which sits on the tops of the Paparoa Range. November is completely booked out.

Both the Ces Clark and Pororari huts – which sit on either side of Moonlight Tops Hut – have plenty of space.

The track encountered the same concerns last year, when five months before it opened, Moonlight Tops Hut was 99.5 per cent full for the season, while Pororari Hut showed nearly 100 nights of availability. The discrepancy in the popularity of the huts is because most mountain bikers choose to ride the track in two days, staying at the halfway juncture.

But for trampers intending to walk the 55km track over four days, the Moonlight's popularity is causing problems.

Auckland tramper Phil Melchior, who tried booking the walk between October and December, noticed the discrepancy.

"I thought 'that's odd', but figured it was because Moonlight Tops is the one bikers use, as that was booked out solidly – the ones either side had plenty of space," he said.

MATTHEW CATT N



Skipping the Moonlight Tops Hut makes for a tough, nearly 30km day of which around a third is above 1000m.

"It's doable, but it's a 10 hour day, and for most people doing the Great Walk – and for people of my age group – I suspect it's behind us," Melchior, 71, said.

"It seems a shame that they haven't organised it in a way that would give both sets of outdoor enthusiasts an equal chance at it."

DOC's Greymouth operations manager Shane Hall said the design of Moonlight Tops Hut allows for an extension of the hut in the future.

"This would use the warden's quarters, requiring a standalone warden's quarters to be built. The dining area would also be extended," he said.

This would extend the capacity from 20 to 28 bunks.

Hall said there are no plans to add more bunk space at the moment, but DOC will review the hut's capacity over the next few years.

Rangiora retiree Lynn Andrews with one of his DIY trap housings

## RANGIORA RETIREES PITCH IN ON PEST CONTROL

You're never too old to get involved – that's the attitude of a handful of retired Rangiora residents doing their bit for conservation.

Charles Upham Retirement Village residents Lynn Andrews, Ross Stewart, Murray Giles, Lindsay Rowe and Kevin Hurley have invested their efforts into Predator Free 2050 by building trap housings for conservation land in Canterbury.

The team's DIY wooden housings prevent curious natives from entering the traps, and have had success in the Medbury Scientific Reserve protecting roroa/great-spotted kiwi, whio and other native fauna from pests.



Their newest batch of 44 tunnel-trap sets has recently been transported into Nina Valley in North Canterbury.

Trapping volunteer George Moran – a member of the Doubtless Conservation group – delivered the traps near Hanmer, to be deployed by helicopter into the south side of the valley.

He and his wife Celia first started volunteer conservation work near Doubtless Hut, which sits in the adjacent valley, and inspired the name of their group.

"In one sense, we haven't moved very far," Moran said.

The traps will extend the work being put in by the Nina Valley Restoration Group at Hurunui College.

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# HOW LOST PEOPLE CAN MAKE THEMSELVES SEEN

A rescuer who helped find two trampers missing for 19 days in Kahurangi National Park has simple advice to ensure you don't suffer a similar ordeal. By **Alistair Hall**



Getting ready to search on the day the trampers were found

The missing trampers made their way to a clearing where they were spotted by the helicopter crew



The rescue helicopter hovers above the lost trampers

Rescuer Hamish Pirie says PLBs are a must for all trampers as is an LED torch with strobe function

**A SEARCH** and rescue professional who was in the helicopter that located two trampers lost in Kahurangi National Park in late May said the pair did plenty right during their 19-day ordeal.

Dion Reynolds and Jessica O'Connor spent 13 days without food after becoming lost on a tramping trip on the western side of the park. The pair had intended to complete a loop in the Anatori River area but became hopelessly lost and ended up in the adjacent Frazer Stream.

Hamish Pirie, who has around 20 years' experience in search and rescue, was in the helicopter that found them. "They had water, they had good warm gear, they had a reasonably good camp set up, and they had a fire

so they had the morale that gives you," he said.

Pirie was impressed they had the foresight to stack green leaf litter next to their campfire. "They knew they needed to have greenery beside the fire so they could chuck it on and make it smoke," he said.

But Pirie said the missing trampers made one glaring mistake: "They didn't have a beacon which would have prevented the whole situation."

It was smoke that alerted Pirie and his crewmates while they were slowly flying up the Frazer Stream. From a distance, it looked like wispy fog settling over the canopy, so the searchers flew closer until they could smell it was indeed smoke. They hovered above

the canopy, trying to determine where the smoke was coming from. Eventually, Reynolds and O'Connor appeared in a clearing and waved to the crew.

"It's always nice to get a good result," said Pirie. "You do hope you will find them but realistically after that much time and looking at the terrain and the limited number of clues that had been picked up, you start to wonder if you are going to find them and in what condition."

"You don't ever give up but you're also being realistic as well."

Pirie said there are several things trampers can do if they become lost in the bush to help searchers find them.

"Obviously, number one, if you have a PLB you prevent all this happening," he said.



But he also said a PLB alone is not necessarily enough. He recommended carrying a high-strength LED torch or headlamp of around 200-lumens with a strobe function to alert a helicopter crew to your exact location. "A flashing LED can be seen by a helicopter in the scrub and bush day or night," he said. Helicopter crews using night vision goggles can see the flame from a lighter or a lit mobile phone screen from several kilometres away, he added.

If you do carry a beacon, Pirie said it should be carried on your person, not in your pack or strapped to it.

"It needs to be on you because if you're incapacitated on the ground with a broken leg, hip or back and you can't move, you need to be able to get that beacon."


Pirie said lost trampers should stick together and find somewhere safe where they can shelter and stay put. There are deliberate clues that can be left to help searchers follow a trail. "If you do know you're lost and you're going to continue to move, make really positive stand-out signs like arrows made with sticks, pieces of clothing tied to trees or leave a note with your intentions between rocks."

## **THERE ARE SEVERAL THINGS TRAMPERS CAN DO IF THEY BECOME LOST IN THE BUSH. NUMBER ONE IS TO CARRY A PLB**

One lost party Pirie was involved with rescuing had made a large 'help' sign with logs in a streambed that could be seen by the helicopter.

If you're in scrub and can hear a helicopter approaching, a good way to make yourself seen is to make the canopy move. You can do this by bending over a sapling and tying something white or bright to the top of it and then waving it above your head. A smoky fire is even better.

Pirie, who owns the online outdoor retail store Gearshop.co.nz said he had offered Reynolds and O'Connor a personal locator beacon so if they ever become lost again, they won't have to wait days for rescue. The beacon has been provided with support from the beacon manufacturer KTI in Australia.

Wilderness contacted Reynolds for comment, but was told he and O'Connor were not doing media interviews and that "we have our story to tell and we want to be the ones to tell it". 

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# CARRIED AWAY IN THE WILKIN RIVER

The power of a river can be deceptive and lead to a frightening experience.

By **Petrina Darrah**

**AFTER THREE DAYS** hiking the Gillespie Pass Circuit in Mt Aspiring National Park, my friend Kirstin and I felt confident and ready to tackle the final stretch of the track. From Siberia Hut, other trampers were taking flights or jet boats back to Makarora, but we opted to set off early and walk out through the Wilkin Valley.

Kirstin is athletic and tall. With her long legs she covers ground quickly. I took my time, stopping to spot rock wren and kakariki flitting through the trees. Before long, Kirstin had disappeared ahead of me.

I assumed she would wait for me where the track diverged. To the right was the Wilkin River and across it, Kerin Forks Hut. To the left, the track continued down the river to Makarora.

When I got there, Kirstin was nowhere to be seen.

The jet boat pick-up point was a further 20 minutes along. I thought she might have found her stride and carried on to that point. But when I arrived, there was no one in sight. By now, I hadn't seen Kirstin for around two hours.

After pausing undecided for a while, I decided to carry on. It was a 40-minute round trip back to the turn-off, so I thought it made more sense to head to Makarora as fast as I could – hopefully finding Kirstin along the way, and if not, reaching help.

I would never have guessed that Kirstin was on the other side of the river.

She had reached the Kerin Forks junction ahead of me. While waiting, she turned right, walking down to look at the river. Two things happened then: she spotted the long drop next to Kerin Forks Hut, and an English couple arrived at the river and started to cross. Seeing them, she decided to



It's best to cross together, arms between packs and gripping waistbelts

cross the river and use the toilet before crossing back to find me.

She took off her boots to keep them dry and crossed behind the other two trampers. The river barely reached her knees, but the current was powerful. Halfway across, she slipped and was dragged downstream by the force of the water and weight of her backpack.

Scraped across the stones, she lost her boots and was submerged for around a minute. The two other hikers ran to help. The ice-cold water had drenched her clothes and pack. She was shaking with cold and shock, so they took her to the hut to warm up.

With wet clothes and no boots, Kirstin knew there was no way she could carry on, and she was too afraid to cross the river again alone.

Barefoot, she limped downstream to where she guessed the jet boat stopped. When it came roaring around the corner she managed to shout and wave until it stopped to help her.

As this was happening, I was racing down the river valley, plunging through mud and knee-high grass. For five hours I walked frantically, without stopping, and without seeing a single other person on the track.

When I finally marched back into Makarora, the jetboat driver waved me down and yelled out that he had given my friend a lift down the river. Confused and still panicked, I beelined for the car park.

Kirstin was sitting by the car, alive and well aside from a few bruises, lost boots, and a ruined kindle.

After a tearful hug we promised that next time, we'll stay within sight of each other. We'll be sure to communicate exactly what we plan on doing. And we won't be attempting more river crossings any time soon.

## WHAT WENT WRONG?

Tim Taylor from Outdoor Training New Zealand looks at what went wrong

### THE GROUP SEPARATED:

Our nearest help in an emergency is our group. We can't help each other if we're not together. Stay within view of each other, stop at junctions and obstacles (especially rivers) and only move on when everyone is together.

### DECISION-MAKING:

A group arriving at a river should ask, 'Do we need to cross?'. If in doubt, don't cross – there are always alternatives. Before crossing, check the river's depth and speed (throw in a twig to estimate the speed in the middle – it's unsafe above walking pace). If it is safe to cross, look for good entry and exit points and consider if the riverbed is slippery or soft. Where will the river push you as you cross? Can you get back to this side safely if the crossing becomes dangerous?

### CROSSING THE RIVER:

Leave boots on – it's better to have wet boots than broken bones. While crossing solo is an option, there's much greater safety in mutual support. Tuck in loose clothing, unclip chest straps and loosen shoulder straps. In pairs (or more), with the strongest person upstream, each person's arm passes between their neighbour's back and pack, firmly gripping the waistbelt on the other side. Keeping hips together, stay parallel to the current as you shuffle across. **W**

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ALISTAIR HALL

Roger Parsons in his Birkenhead garden says he lightened his pack weight so he could keep tramping

## THE LIGHTER THE PACK, THE FURTHER YOU GO

Roger Parsons wants you to know he's just an average trampler. And he is, if your average trampler hikes long trails into their seventies. By **Alistair Hall**

**SPEND 42 YEARS** with a tramping club and you'll develop some decent trail fitness, especially if your club happens to organise dozens of trips a year including at least one long tramp in the South Island.

But one day you'll also realise you maybe aren't quite as fast as you once were. For 75-year-old Aucklander Roger Parsons, a veteran of the North Shore Tramping Club, that epiphany came in his mid-sixties. Rather than retire his pack for good though, he began seeking out the lightest gear he could find.

"I'm not a fast trampler but you can look at my build and see I've done it long enough that I can keep going all day," he says. "But I did start feeling that if I wanted to keep up with the club, I needed to lighten my pack."

After years of travelling to Europe and hiking hut-to-hut trails in the Italian Dolomites, he knew it was possible to tramp with a light load but wasn't sure it could be so easily done in New Zealand where the hut infrastructure was less luxurious.

"In Europe, you could go from hut to hut indefinitely if you wanted to," he says. "You don't have a heavy pack and you don't need to carry a lot of food."

The answer wasn't to reduce his pack size but to reduce his pack weight.

Ten years ago, the ultralight gear movement was in its infancy in New Zealand, but Parsons sourced a Marmot 900-fill goose down sleeping bag weighing 890g and costing \$800. "Back then, there wasn't really much available," he says. "Now, for half the price and weight you could probably get a better sleeping bag."

Over the next few years, he added a three-quarter-length Therm-A-Rest sleeping mat weighing 360g and a Terra Nova Laser tent weighing 700g and costing an eye-watering \$1200. "It's a ridiculous tent," he says. "It feels like tissue paper. Double skin, cuben fibre. The first time I used it, it rained all night. It was a good tent."

He refined his clothing, bringing in merino layers and a waist-length waterproof jacket. He switched to a Jetboil stove capable of boiling water quickly and little else, culinarily speaking. His last major upgrade was a 55-litre cuben-fibre Z Pack worth \$600 and weighing just 660g.



“

**IF YOU START OVER-LOADING IT, IT WILL BE UNCOMFORTABLE. UP TO 10KG IS OK, BUT I WOULDN'T WANT TO CARRY MUCH MORE. IT'S NOT A MACPAC”**

He had good reason for selecting his pack last: “Everything else has to be lightweight before you go to a lightweight pack,” he says. “If you start overloading it, it will be uncomfortable and it will not survive. Up to 10kg is OK, but I wouldn't want to carry much more. It's not a Macpac.”

By the time he was 71, Parsons' gear splurge was over and he was ready to test how far he could go with his new lightweight setup. He had the perfect trail in mind: the nearly 1400km South Island section of the Te Araroa Trail.


With a base pack weight of around 7.5kg, plus up to five days worth of food, carefully prepared to ensure 500g for each day on the trail, his pack was much lighter than most of the other TA walkers he encountered.

“Some of them were carrying 20kg,” he says. “They can because they are young and fit, but I don't think I could have done it.”

Parsons hiked the trail in four sections over two summers, often accompanied by friends who made sure he didn't lose himself to the trail. “There is an addictive element to it which if you're on your own I think you can give into. You've left your normal life behind. What are you doing? You're doing the TA Trail and everything else is subsidiary, it just disappears.”

While he's keen enough to talk about his gear, he doesn't like to talk up his long trail achievement: “I'm just an average trumper,” he says. “I've enjoyed tramping all my life but I'm not claiming to be superhuman or anything.”

Parsons' tramping days are far from over. He volunteers for track clearing in the Kaimai Ranges and is still an active member of the tramping club. He even harbours dreams to walk the Cape Reinga to Auckland section of the TA.

“Somehow, these long-distance walks get into your blood,” he says. 

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# THE KAIMANGO ROAD ANGELS

Hundreds of Te Araroa Trail walkers have enjoyed warmth and hospitality on Waikato's Kaimango Road, thanks to a network of trail angels. By **Matthew Cattin**

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**M**t Pirongia is a bittersweet milestone for Te Araroa Trail walkers. Pahautea Hut, near the

mountain's summit, is the first hut southbound thru-hikers encounter on their journey to Bluff, though its comfort is short-lived.

From its front steps, Hihikiwi Track hurls walkers down Pirongia's southern slopes over 6.4km of mud, root ladders and bogs – a vengeful welcome back for those who dared defy nature with a night indoors.

The walk – or squelch – takes up to six hours, and trampers emerge exhausted and caked in earth – the memories of last night's bunk buried deep beneath rising cortisol levels.

But then, a little ways down Kaimango Road, fortune favours the battered, bruised and brave.

On a 2.5km stretch of the gravel country road, there lives a network of trail angels who take in hundreds of weary walkers every season.

Veteran trail angel Jo Macky has been hosting walkers since two bedraggled people turned up on a stormy night in 2014, looking like drenched cats.

"People kept just walking up the drive," she says. "We don't advertise – they just show up. It happened organically, and they don't stop coming."

For Macky's neighbours Casey and Jon Huffstutler, the knock came a few seasons later, when walkers arrived at their door asking to fill their water bottles.

"After that, we got on the trail angels page on Facebook and said 'hey, we're here if you want to camp out'," Casey says.

Since then, hundreds of walkers have accepted the famous Kaimango Road hospitality – the past season alone saw the neighbours host 340 walkers.

After the hellish descent from Pirongia, the welcome of a hot meal, shower and safe place to sleep is appreciated by all but is overwhelming for many.



ABOVE: Kaimango Road angel Casey Huffstutler welcomes hundreds of TA walkers each year; LEFT: Jo Macky has shed tears with some of the walkers who stop by her home on Kaimango Road



"We've all been in tears sometimes – we had one walker stay, and it sounded like they certainly had a hard life," Macky says. "They said they didn't realise there were such nice people in the world, and we were just doing our natural thing."

Perhaps not surprisingly, the Huffstutlers have also bonded with those they offer shelter to. "It's amazing how many get in touch afterwards, sending postcards saying thank you so much," Casey says.

The opportunity to stay on a lifestyle block is also a new experience for many trampers.

"They're blown away when they go out to the garden – you can eat all of the flowers, and our food is all homegrown," Casey says.

"It's hard work to live our life, so it inspires me to keep doing what we're doing – it's an inspiration for how we live," Macky says.

Like his neighbours, Kaimango Road photographer Tom Lee also experienced a serendipitous introduction to the trail walkers.

"My partner Hannah rescued a young Swiss guy in the rain one night, so we welcomed him in and gave him dinner," Lee says.

The chance meeting inspired the couple to continue hosting walkers, and it set Lee's Te Araroa Trail Project into motion. The photography project is an attempt to capture the diverse faces and stories of the trail walkers as they find refuge on Kaimango Road.

Lee's work is displayed on his Instagram page @the\_te\_araroa\_project, and he hopes to one day compile his images and interviews into an exhibition and book.


"Photography is my job, but it's always good to have a long term project you're working on, and it's free candy in that sense – the trade was there, I just had to find out if the walkers were willing to participate," he says.

The experiences Lee has shared with walkers have inspired him, "but not to go on a 3000km walk," he laughs.

"There seem to be common themes in people looking for answers that they weren't getting day-to-day, and it makes you appreciate that there is more to life than having a good time, being at home and working nine to five," he says.

"It's such a massive feat, and seeing how hard their journey is inspires me to do better in my life and the things I'm putting my energy into."

Much to their disappointment, the Kaimango Road angels are expecting a reduced Te Araroa season for 2020/21 due to Covid-19, but last year's increase in Kiwi walkers is reason to hope for a strong turnout of local trampers on the trail.

And those that make the journey will have a slice of Kaimango hospitality to look forward to. 





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# See more... SILVER BEECH FOREST

How to explore the mossy majesty of a silver beech forest.

By Shaun Barnett

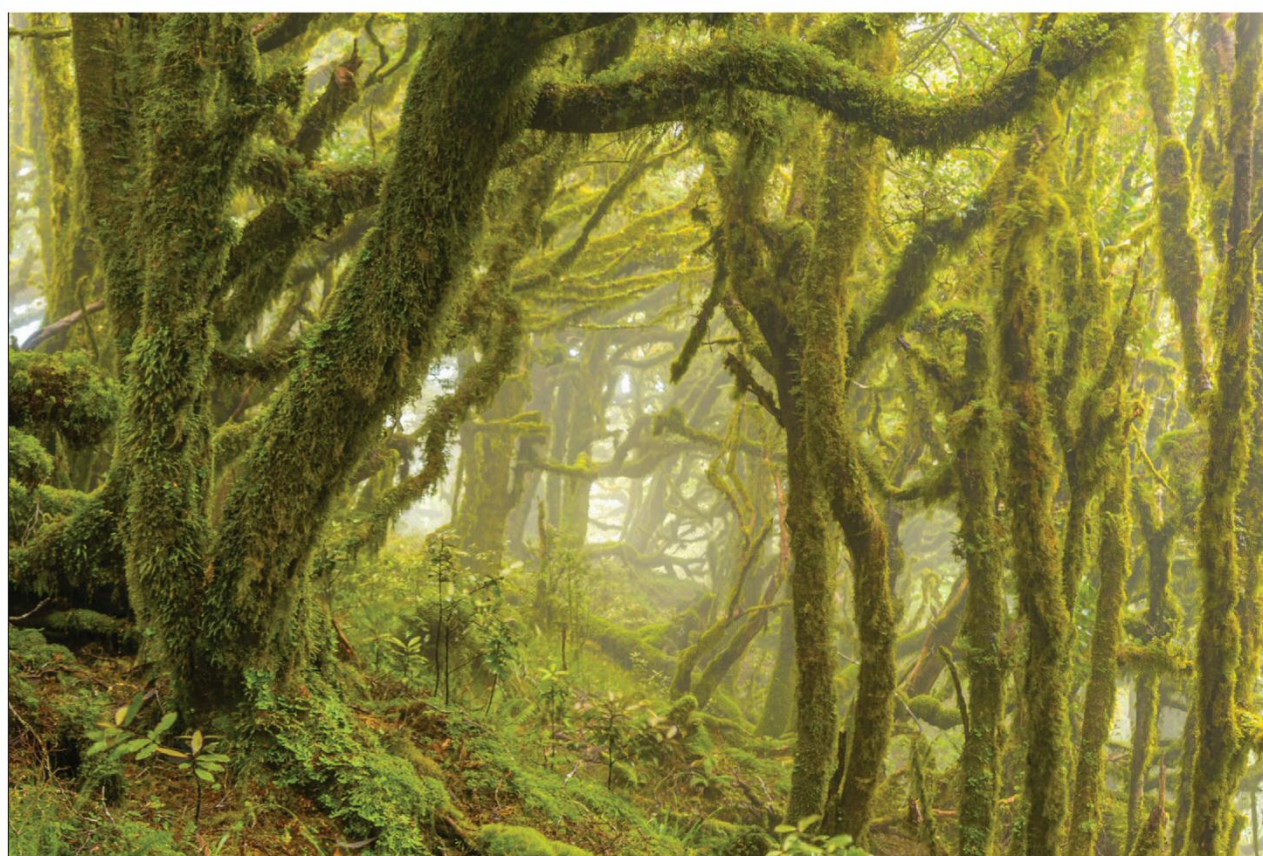
**AS YOU APPROACH** the bush-line, the trees grow progressively more stunted, cowed by the combined effects of altitude and the punishing weather. Trees, possibly hundreds of years old, have canopies barely taller than the average trumper. Lichen cloaks their trunks, and wispy moss too, plus a range of liverworts and filmy ferns to create a miniature ecosystem in itself.

Mist swirls through the trees, rendering those farthest away a ghostly grey, while the closer ones are draped in vibrant green moss. It's almost like a colour photograph has been superimposed on a monochrome one, such is the colour-stripping qualities of mist in a high altitude forest.

Even the most tops-addicted trumper can admit there is a singular beauty to stunted silver beech forest growing just below the limits of its endurance. And many a trumper has blessed its life-saving shelter when escaping a tempest on the tops.

New Zealand has five species of beech trees. Botanists have recently placed silver beech in its own genus, separate from the other four, so it is now *Lophozonia menziesii* (formerly *Nothofagus menziesii*). While mountain beech dominates the bushline in most mountain areas, in the Tararua and Remutaka Ranges it is silver beech that holds reign.

Here are four places where this tree reaches mossy majesty.



SHAUN BARNETT/BLACK ROBIN PHOTOGRAPHY

Silver beech forest near Dracophyllum Knob, Tararua Forest Park



1.

## KAHIWIROA TO ANDERSON MEMORIAL HUT RIDGE, TARARUA FOREST PARK

Most North Island trampers aspire to complete the classic 4–5-day circuit over the Tararua Peaks at some stage in their outdoor career. It's a tramp involving an arduous section of tops, across rugged knolls and the infamous Tararua Peaks ladder. Exquisite sections of high altitude beech forest exist on the route, notably the 2km section between Kahiwi-roa and Anderson Memorial Hut.

2.

## DRACOPHYLLUM KNOB RIDGE, TARARUA FOREST PARK

This ridge is the defining home of high altitude silver beech. It's also the route of the Te Araroa Trail, which traverses part of the Tararua Range between the peaks of Pukematawai and Crawford. Forest along the 12km ridge is almost pure silver beech, extending the whole way above the crucial 1000m altitude, which means the trees remain stunted. The entire route from Ohau to Otaki takes 3–4 days.


3.

## MT MATTHEWS, REMUTAKA FOREST PARK

Silver beech in the Remutaka Range makes its most impressively stunted appearance on Mt Matthews, the area's highest peak. The Mt Matthews Track climbs from the Orongorongo Valley towards South Saddle, then traverses a narrow ridge of gorgeously dwarfed silver beech to emerge on the 941m summit. Allow a full day, or two if staying in one of the valley's huts.

4.

## PAPATAHI CROSSING, REMUTAKA FOREST PARK, WAIRARAPA

The two-day Papatahi Crossing track begins from the Battery Stream, in the Wairarapa, and climbs over Papatahi, a forest-clad knoll of 902m, where wizened silver beech trees mingle their mossy branches together in the low canopy. The route then descends steeply beside large erosion scars into the Orongorongo River to complete a crossing of the Remutaka Range. 



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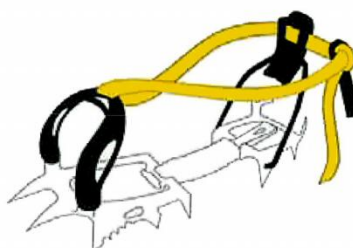
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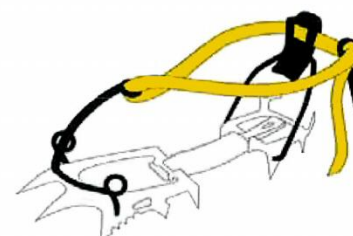
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# Turning up THE VOLUME

Okere Falls Loop Track, Rotorua

**FREE ATTRACTIONS** are hard to come by in Rotorua, so it was nice to find this refuge of natural beauty that doesn't cost a cent.

Okere Falls is a dramatic section of the Kaituna River – the main outflow of lakes Rotorua and Rotoiti. The best way to take it in is via the Okere Falls Loop Track, which offers three stunning look-outs over the high volume white water, popular with rafters and kayakers.

From the main car park, a well-formed bush track leads left at a fork, up and over a ridge and down to the trout pools – it's an easy walk of around 15 minutes, but there's little to see from below the canopy.

By the trout pools – a popular fishing spot – is a second car park and the lower falls, which are impressive in their own right but are just a taster of what's coming.

To complete the loop, return via the undulating scenic track which hugs the true left of the Kaituna River.

Around halfway, a short sidetrack leads to a viewing platform overlooking the lush bowl of Tutea Falls, the highest commercially rafted waterfall in the world.

At 7m, they're not overly high, but like the Huka Falls of Taupō, it's the volume of water that's impressive.

If you've timed your visit, you'll see (and hear) the rafters squeeze through the narrow chute.

From the platform, well-worn steps have been carved into the cliff edge leading to Tutea's Caves.

Local stories say Māori would scale ropes to hide in these caves in times of trouble, and in more recent history, a photographer stationed himself here in the early 1900s to take photographs of tourists.

From here, the track returns to the car park, where a short trail leads to the hydro-electric power station – definitely worth a look.

- Matthew Cattin



## WILD FILE

**Access** From Trout Pool Road car park

**Grade** Easy

**Time** 1hr

**Distance** 2.02km

**Total ascent** 119m

**Topo50 map** BE37

Find the map and route notes for this trip at [www.wildernessmag.co.nz](http://www.wildernessmag.co.nz)

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A kayaker braves the  
Okere River's lower falls



## WAYPOINTS

### CONSTANT BEAUTY



Lake Constance, Nelson  
Lakes National Park



**LAKE CONSTANCE** is huge. Two kilometres long and up to 700m wide, it lies in a massive post-glacial basin at 1340m, making it the largest truly alpine lake in New Zealand. While there are larger valley floor lakes in the Aoraki/Mt Cook region that could be termed alpine, they are much lower at 900-1100m, and some of these are still smaller than Lake Constance which fills the upper Sabine Valley below rugged Waiau Pass on the Te Araroa Trail.

This reach of indigo blue luminescence immerses the viewer into a world of alpine beauty virtually unrivalled elsewhere in New Zealand. During the winter months, the lake view takes on an even greater depth and austerity, a magnified presence if you will.

We made the short climb up over the immense boulder dam holding back the waters from nearby Blue Lake Hut one early winter's day, before tackling the steep and snowy route to Moss Pass – and we were pleased we did. That day, the lake was still and calm and with fresh powder snow covering the entire basin it was a sight to behold.

Taking stock of the scene was impossible, it was something you needed to imbibe, to savour and store amid the memories of the wild.

- Pat Barrett



## WILD FILE

**Access** From either Lake Rotoiti or Lake Rotoroa. Lake Constance is reached on the Waiau Pass Route or as a diversion to the Moss Pass Route

**Grade** Moderate-difficult

**Time** 6-9 days to walk the Waiau Pass Route

**Distance** 98km

**Map** BS24

Find the map and route notes for this trip at [www.wildernessmag.co.nz](http://www.wildernessmag.co.nz)

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Lake Constance is the largest high alpine lake in New Zealand and is a sight to behold on a crisp winter's day





Climbing to  
the summit of  
Travers Peak

## A TOP-OF-THE-WORLD TRAVERS

Travers Peak, Lewis Pass National Reserve

**TRAVERS PEAK** has been a day trip destination of mine for many years – so much so, that my latest outing here was the ninth time I have climbed it. I have also traversed it on a few occasions when heading deeper into the reserve to explore other peaks, ridges and valleys. It is such a centrally placed peak that it lends itself well to doing longer trips after first passing over the summit.

The latest outing was strictly a cruise to the top to take in the grand panorama.

Beginning at Deer Valley car park (which is also a spot for an overnight camp), we crossed the highway and headed along Foleys Track which climbs moderately at first through beautiful beech forest over terraces to the toe of the ridge leading to Travers Peak (1724m).

It does steepen after that, but nothing that brought us into too much of a sweat, and then it was a steady uphill grind through the shrinking forest trees all the way to 1300m – an elevation gain of 500m from the road – and the end of the marked track.

We were now above the bushline and into tussock, with a poled route leading over open ridgeline, past tarns, hollows and boulder fields. Eventually, we reached the final push

to the top up the 100m-high summit cone.

The summit – there's actually two – with the eastern one offering the better view, is small and has a top-of-the-world feeling to it with outstanding views in every direction, including down and right around the compass. We took lunch, sat back in the sun and enjoyed the spectacle.

There is so much country to observe from there – the highway, the Maruia Valley and Spenser Mountains, St James Walkway, Opera and Libretto ranges, Mt Technical, Nina Valley, Freyberg Range – it goes on and it is worth taking a couple of maps if you are unfamiliar with the region to work out which ridges and valleys can be seen.

Once we had done the rounds, it was time to head down – a much better prospect to climbing up, especially on a warm and sunny day. There are some hidden tarns, just off the ridgeline to the north-west around 1400m, that could provide refreshment.

Soon enough we reached the bush track and wandered to the road for a final cup of tea before driving the long and winding highway back to Christchurch.

Trip done, and a good one.

- Pat Barrett



### WILD FILE

**Access** SH7 to just south of Lewis pass summit at Deer Valley car park

**Grade**

Moderate

**Time** 2-3hr to summit

**Distance** 3.76km to summit

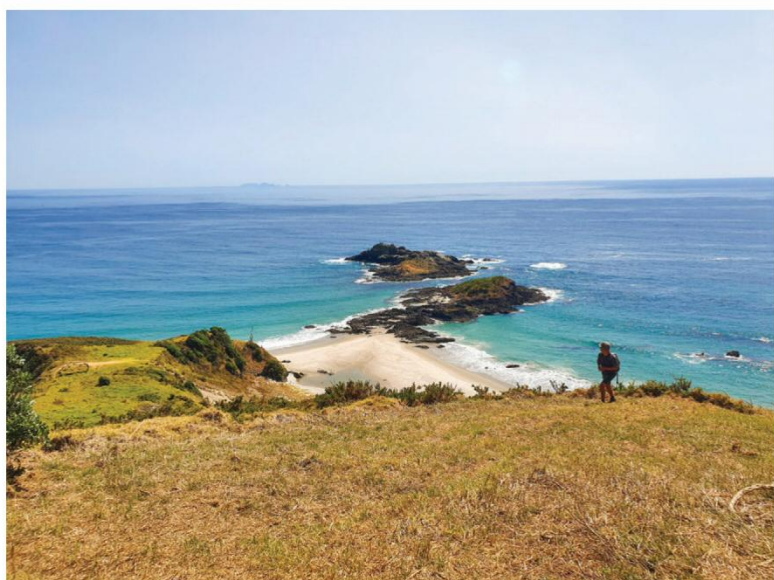
**Total ascent** 959m

**Topo50 map** BT23

Find the map and route notes for this trip at [www.wildernessmag.co.nz](http://www.wildernessmag.co.nz)

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## ACROSS THE LION'S BACK

Te Whara Track, Bream Head Scenic Reserve

**THE ROCK** pillar of the Te Whara summit rises a near-vertical 476m above the sea. From this sheer vantage point, you get some of the best coastal views in Northland.

The Te Whara Track, located in the Bream Head Reserve near Whangarei, is a challenging day walk that follows a 700-year old Māori trail past remnants of Second World War paraphernalia, through thick coastal forest.

As a one-way track, it's easiest to tackle this walk with two vehicles, so you have transport at each end. If you're going solo, the walk from one end of the track to the other via the road is an additional 4.5km.

You can hike the track in either direction but starting at the Ocean Beach end is marginally easier.

From the Ocean Beach car park, the track climbs steadily uphill across open grassy hillside. For most of the way there are no switchbacks, so it can be a challenging ascent.

Each time you stop to catch your breath, you'll have clear views out to sea.

About 45 minutes into the walk, the track arrives in a clearing with a picnic table where you can pause to rest and enjoy the view. From here, a short track detours through the regenerating bush to a wartime radar station. It was built in 1942 to take advantage of the strategic location with a view of all boat traffic passing in and out of Whangarei Harbour.

As the trail continues to climb, the coastal rainforest becomes more impressive, laced with thick supplejack and dense with ancient puriri trees which stretch their gnarled roots across the path. After another 30 minutes, the summit of Te Whara is reached.



ABOVE: View from the Ocean Beach end of the track at the beginning of the climb to the ridge;  
LEFT: Climbing up open hillside from Ocean Beach



### WILD FILE

**Access** Ocean Beach car park on Ranui Road, or Urquharts Bay car park

**Grade** Easy-moderate

**Time** 5.5hr (allow an extra hour if detouring to Peach Cove)

**Distance** 7.5km

**Total ascent** 731m

**Topo50 map** AX31

#### Further information

Bream Head Scenic Reserve is an area of spiritual and archaeological significance, considered wahi tapu, or sacred, by Māori. Ensure you stay on the marked trails.

Find the map and route notes for this trip at [www.wildernessmag.co.nz](http://www.wildernessmag.co.nz)

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Don't miss the narrow track that veers off to the left and leads to the rock pillar.

With sheer drops on three sides, scrambling up the rocky peak isn't for the faint-hearted. The 360-degree panorama is worth it, though – on a clear day, views extend north across the bright blue ocean to Cape Brett and as far south as Tāwharanui Peninsula. Out to sea are the Hen and Chicken Islands, as well as Little Barrier and the Poor Knights Islands.

The track continues along the apex of the ridge, undulating gently through the bush. Occasional rock formations, remnants of the area's volcanic past, provide convenient lookout points and rest stops.

These rocky outcrops plunge precipitously to the ocean, so exercise caution if climbing them.

Roughly halfway along the ridgeline is the turn off for Peach Cove Hut. In the summer months, this is a worthwhile detour to the eight-bunk hut next to a stony beach. This is a quiet spot to cool off and enjoy lunch. (The price for popping down to Peach Cove is the steep climb back up more than 800 steps.)

From the Peach Cove intersection, the track continues along the blade of the ridge to Matariki/Mt Lion (395m). From this summit, the trail descends steep but well-maintained stairs. On the way down, the striking ivory crescent of Smugglers Cove makes a great distraction from the many steps.

At the bottom, turn right and head straight to the Urquharts Bay car park and the end of the track or turn left for a side trip to the crisp white beach of Smugglers Cove.

- Petrina Darrah





## PATRIARCH OF THE KAHURANGI

Mt Patriarch via  
Chummies Track,  
Kahurangi National Park

**PERHAPS THE MOST** rewarding way to approach Mt Patriarch is on the Chummies Track, up past John Reid Hut, on to the southern end of the Arthur Range.

Almost directly above John Reid Hut, on Pt1463, is a flat tussocky area well suited to pitching a tent. Equipped with a resident weka, but no water, this spot is superb for both expansive sunsets and sunrises. And, once on the ridge, much of the hard grind to reach Mt Patriarch (1701m) lies behind.

When our party of four visited the mountain, to reduce the amount of water we had to carry to the campsite, we, and the John Reid Hut weka, enjoyed dinner at the hut before climbing the final 120m to the tops. Once on the ridge, it's only a matter of undulating along it for a couple of panoramic hours to reach a 1350m saddle beneath Mt Patriarch. Before that

though, from the campsite on Pt1463, we were treated to a moody yet colourful sunset, a chilly night and an uplifting multicoloured sunrise.

At first, the journey along the ridge didn't reveal Patriarch. First, Pt1566 had to be negotiated. But once on top of it, the mountain dominated the scene, providing a great spot for a breather. We also enjoyed some local entertainment compliments of a kea nesting in a crag near the trail. After crossing another 1500m high point, we reached the saddle and dropped our packs for the final climb.

It's just a 350m scramble to reach the summit, entailing no real difficulties. About halfway up, it appeared that there might be as we approached some dramatic karst formations, but a trail led through rubble and tussock beside the steeper rock.





View along the Arthur Range to Mt Patriarch

On top, there were seemingly endless views of Kahurangi National Park in all directions. And, almost directly south, a jagged ridge stretched out below to Patriarch's slightly lower second summit (1692m). We'd thought we might go there, but when confronted with the distance involved, plus the broken nature of the terrain, we realised we didn't have time.

As we retraced our steps off the summit, the route leading back to our bivy site lay spread out before us, leading north-east along the disjointed spine of the Arthur Range – an impressive landscape offering enticing scope for future trips.

From the saddle, it was another hour down through beech forest to Kiwi Saddle Hut. From here, the Wangapeka Track can be taken to the trailhead at Siberia Campsite.

- Peter Laurenson



#### WILD FILE

**Access** From Wangapeka River Road  
**Grade** Moderate  
**Time** Wangapeka River to Pt1463, 4-5hr; To Kiwi Saddle Hut via Mt Patriarch, 4-6hr; To Siberia Campsite, 5-6hr  
**Distance** 32.4km  
**Total ascent** 2990m  
**Topo50 map** BQ23, BQ24

Find the map and route notes for this trip at [www.wildernessmag.co.nz](http://www.wildernessmag.co.nz)

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Views from Emerald Lake with  
the Kaimanawa Range beyond

## CROSSING OFF AN ICON

Tongariro Alpine Crossing,  
Tongariro National Park

**RENAMED THE** Tongariro Alpine Crossing in 2007, the iconic day walk is responsible for more rescues than any other in New Zealand. In good weather, however, it's hard to beat.

At 1120m, Mangatepopo car park sits 360m higher than Ketetahi car park at the opposite end, making it the obvious starting point.

Ngauruhoe is the star of the show for the first hour and a half of the track, which eases its way along the true left of the Mangatepopo River on an easy path with some boardwalk sections.

The Devil's Staircase is the first – and probably the toughest – sustained climb of the track, and it offers hard-earned views west all the way to Taranaki, which seems to grow in stature the higher you climb.

Preparedness checkpoints stagger the ascent, warning walkers of weather dangers and urging they turn back if cloud cover matches the pictures. It's a smart – and hopefully effective – deterrent from DOC.

The climb offers no respite for half an hour, but the pancake-flat South Crater provides an opportunity to catch your breath and recover before the push to the Red Crater ridgeline.

The ascent isn't as intense as Devil's Staircase, and it soon levels out on a small plateau, with brilliant views over the vibrant crater and the Kaimanawa Ranges beyond.



After a short climb up and over the humpy Red Crater summit, a new world awaits.

The iconic scree descent to Emerald Lakes is postcard tramping, and the startling saturation of the lakes never ceases to amaze – they really are as vibrant as the photos.

The feet of thousands of walkers have dulled what may have once been a razor ridge, and most people descend without too much trouble. Steep drop-offs on either side of the scree ridge remind how ugly this section could be in foul weather.

The track continues past the stunning

lakes to flat ground at Central Crater, which is crossed easily before the last decent climb of the tramp to the ridge overlooking Blue Lake.

From here, Mts Tongariro, Ngauruhoe and Ruapehu align for one of the best views of the crossing.

The first hour of the descent to Ketetahi is a seldom-mentioned highlight and would be a popular walk in its own right if not overshadowed by the crater crossing. Sweeping switchbacks wind in an easy gradient down the northern slope, overlooking Lake Rotoaira, Taupō and the car park which never seems to get closer.





Beautiful Emerald Lakes

Tussock and subalpine plants contribute an earthy palette of ochre, gold and green, reminiscent of the South Island, and completely unlike the barren scrubs on the colder southern slopes.

Toilets, and the accompanying queues, can be found at the site of the old Ketetahi Hut, demolished after suffering damage in the 2012 eruption of Te Maari Crater.

From here, the track descends below the bushline, which is stunted at first, but grows in height and variety as the altitude drops.

With tree cover comes the welcoming calls of tui and pīwakawaka, offering a comforting contrast to the deathly quiet of the alpine zone.

The final stretch of intermittent stairs is tough on aching legs, but the gradient eases as the track crosses a lahar zone, and onto the last leg before the car park.

- Matthew Cattin



## WILD FILE

### Access

Mangatepopo car park

**Grade** Moderate

**Time** 7-8hr

**Distance**

19.4km

**Total ascent**

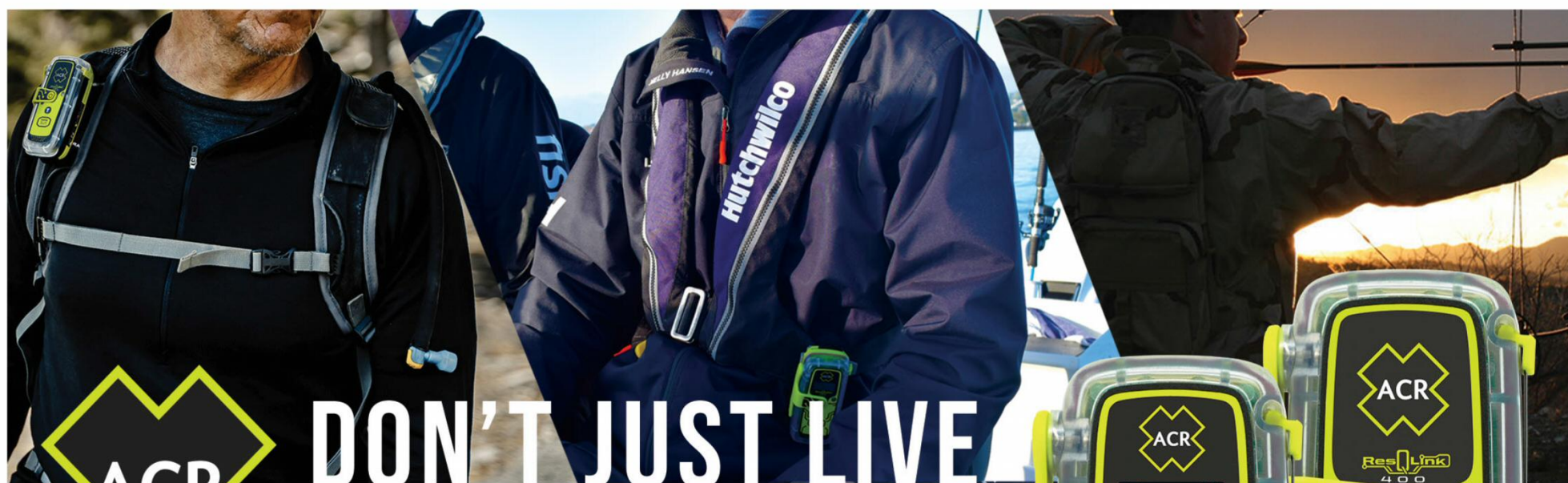
1024m

**Topo50 map**

BH34

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OFF THE BEATEN TRACK





Formidable cliffs on  
the Brames Falls track  
heading to Lake Dive

# *THE MISSING* **mountain** **MAN**



Hazel Phillips walks Taranaki's Around the Mountain  
Circuit and traces the last steps of the Reverend William  
Murray who disappeared in 1923

If Taranaki were an animal, it would be the Irukandji – a jellyfish, seldom actually seen, whose size is disproportionate to its danger. The Irukandji, according to survivors of its sting, produces 'a dizzying whorl of horrendous pain', including muscle and joint aches and an impending sense of doom.

I reckon I came close to death by Irukandji on a sailing trip in the Whitsundays in 2007 – I was about to jump into the water when our skipper pulled up the anchor and shifted the boat, to reveal in the sunlight that the channel we were anchored in was stuffed with jellyfish of all kinds.

As far as doom goes, I've been terrified of Taranaki Maunga since the deaths of two climbers near the summit in 2013. I don't tell my tramping buddy Jean about my fear, or about the fact that I'm using our Around the Mountain trip as a dodgy sort of aversion therapy. (She'll find out when she reads this story. Sorry Jean.)

Instead, I sell her on the idea that we'll be chasing the threads of the Reverend William Murray, who went missing on Taranaki in 1923 and whose remains have never been found. Or at least, not all of his remains.

It's a clear forecast of four or five days of sunshine and no wind when we set off from Dawson Falls. Along with our objectives of aversion therapy and trying to find the Reverend's bones, I'm also

experimenting with dehydrating my own food, interested to see what I can get my nutrition packs down to (small and light), and still be able to tramp with reasonable energy. It's survivalism of a sort, backed up by two packets of emergency two-minute noodles. I've dehydrated everything from brown rice to spinach, hummus, canned tomatoes and even a green smoothie. It's a test to see how far and long I could theoretically tramp without needing to resupply my food.

With compliant weather conditions, we make excellent time on the upper mountain tracks around to Holly Hut, broken up by a lunch stop at Taurangi Lodge. There, we can see all the way to the central plateau's volcanoes. In sharp contrast to Taranaki, the sides of Ruapehu slope away gently: I relate to Ruapehu as a female, but I am acutely aware that 'he' was part of the battle for the affections of the nearby, fern-covered sexy Pihanga.

It's a reasonable day to Holly Hut, where we sneak in under the level two restrictions of 10 people in the hut, with a few late stragglers pushing it over the limit to 13, but nobody really seems to care, sitting in front of a roaring fire with a frost already forming on the grass outside. Crackable ice forms over puddles and those who fill up their bottles early are thankful as the water tank freezes before we get to bed.

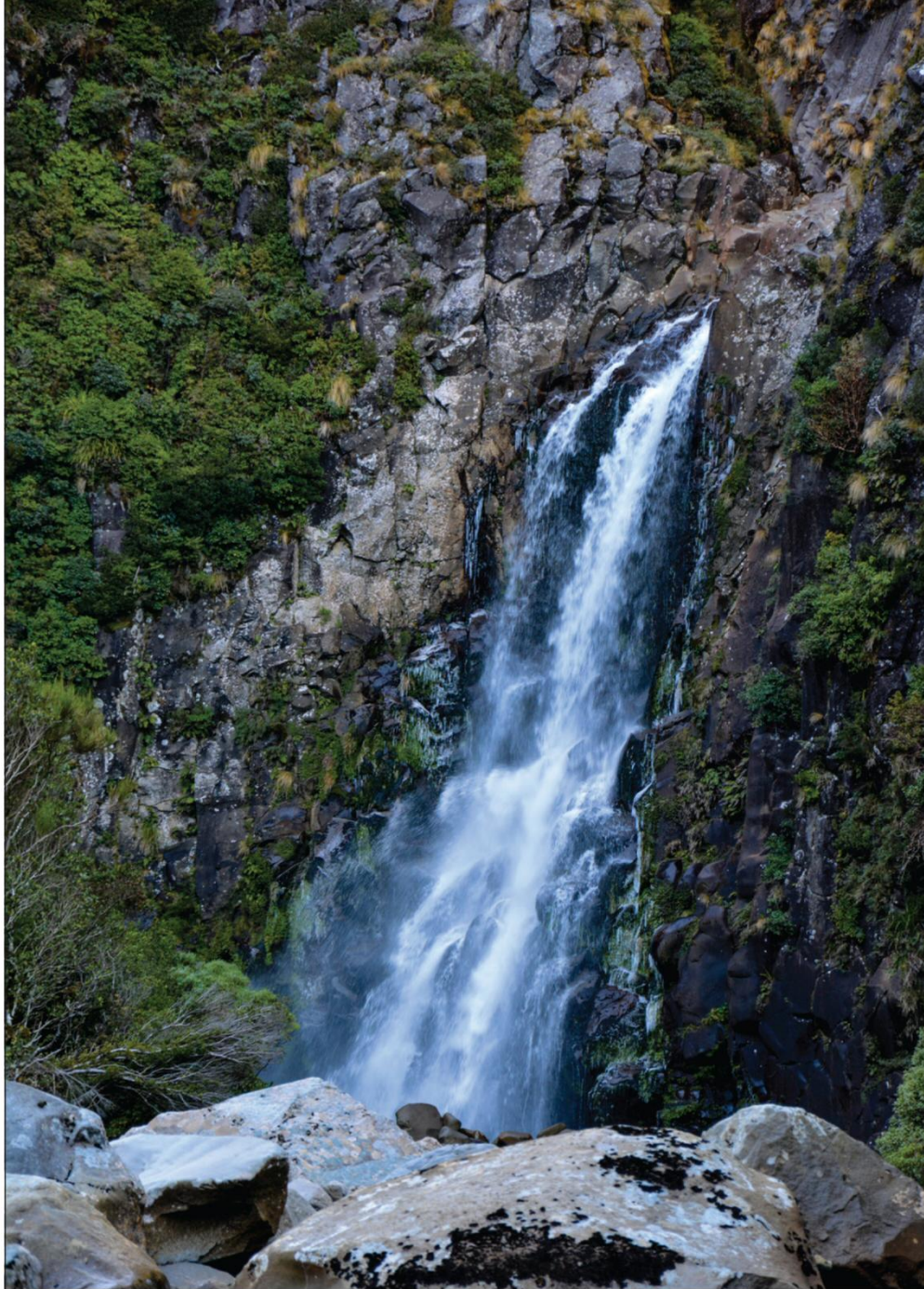


I've teased the story of the Reverend to Jean already and she demands the details once we're tucked up dry and warm in the bunkrooms. (Dehy dinner: a successful effort of pasta, dehy tomato pasta sauce, veges and dehy capers.)

In January 1923, the Reverend William Murray left Dawson Falls at 4.45am for the summit with three friends, intending to descend to North Egmont. They summited at 9.30am, ate an early lunch, then went to descend. But Murray didn't want to stick to the plan to head to North Egmont and insisted on taking a different route at right angles to the North Ridge Track. Visibility deteriorated. His friends protested. The route they were attempting went down a compressed and rock-walled snowfield littered with the carcass of the cliffs falling from above. But Murray was determined and refused to retreat. One man went back to Dawson Falls to raise the alarm, while the other two followed for a while, shouting at Murray, although he refused to respond. The others reached Dawson Falls again at 7pm and raised the alarm the next day when Murray didn't emerge.

Murray, who was one of the founders of the Highlander condensed milk brand, was also a businessman who was described as 'stalwart', fit and sturdy, and determined. But heavy rain began to fall on the mountain and he was lost in an area that was wild and bleak, scattered with tough scrub. Wind off the sea would be funneled up the ravines between the spurs.

Searchers, exhausted, tracked him for days afterwards, finding traces of his travels: purposely broken branches, leaves, footprints, the remains of a small fire and a piece of cord tied to some scrub. They discovered two of his camping spots. He was headed towards Bells Falls and The Dome, near Holly Hut, an area featuring bluffs, gorges and tough terrain. Eventually, searchers concluded he had been lost near Bells Falls. There, they found the sole of a boot, marked with indelible ink 'W.T.M. Jan. 31st' – the date he'd gone missing – tied to two branches bent across the path and swinging conspicuously in the wind. They concluded he'd been swept over Bells Falls. After fruitlessly bombing the pool at the base of the falls with gelignite in an attempt to dislodge his body, they abandoned the search on February 20.



Bells Falls where the missing Reverend is thought to have died

## SOMETHING'S AFOOT

Our second day dawned with a frost, clear skies and sunshine emerging centimetre by centimetre to eventually defrost our merino-clad bodies as we warmed up aching muscles with a slow plod down to Bells Falls, a side trip on the track from Holly Hut to Waiaua Gorge Hut. A piece of blue tape was tied to scrub on my left, the only one I saw on this track, but I initially wrote it off as a trap line.

Jean photographed Bells Falls and I thought a lot about how the Reverend would have fared in this spot. The falls are in a V shape, violently carved out of the rock, spilling down and punching into the pool. This is the headwaters of the Stony River, true to its name, littered with boulders and rocks to break anyone travelling down it – by choice or otherwise.

"I guess there wouldn't be much left of a body after it's gone over the falls and down the river," I said to Jean, who told me bodies can stay in one piece after an initial impact but once the bones are broken, there's not much to hold it together. It's possible the Reverend fell to pieces fairly quickly if he got bumped over the falls and washed down the Stony River in torrential rain.

Just over a year after the Reverend's disappearance, a group of men from the Taranaki County Council working in the Stony River found a tweed jacket, then a boot – with a human foot inside, clad in a sock. It was assumed to be Murray as no-one else had been reported missing on the mountain since his disappearance – and he had been wearing a dark tweed suit on the climb.

"A foot would stay in the boot quite easily," Jean said. "The boot sort of holds it in there."

I was still thinking about the Reverend and his last journey as we turned off the Stony River Track and came to a track junction where the Puniho Track (straight up) meets the Kapoiaia Track (across the mountain). I'd done the Kapoiaia Track eight years ago and what memory I had of it was prompting me to suggest going via Kahui Hut. And anyway, I hadn't bagged that hut yet. (The Kapoiaia Track ostensibly maintains the same contour line as it cuts across the mountain's flanks, but it scrambles down and out of endless stream beds.) A warning sign cemented our decision.

At around 960m, the track takes a sharp, 90-degree right turn, often a sign that another track used to intersect with that and you're standing at the T junction. Peering into the scrub, a 'Danger' sign well hidden amongst the greenery confirmed my suspicions. Another piece



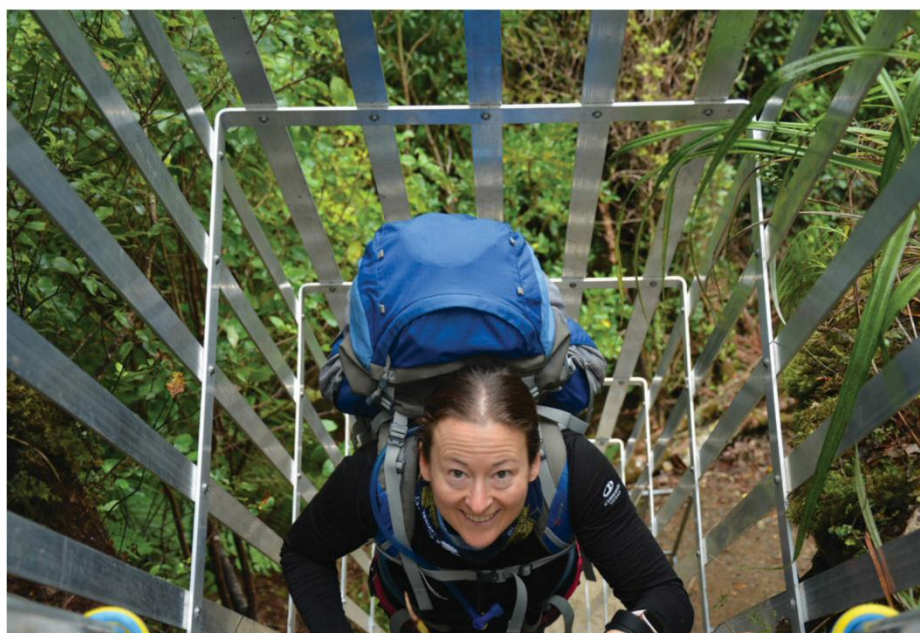
of blue tape highlighted the connection, and checking an old map (as late as 1989, but the junction also features in the *Lonely Planet* guide from 2006) confirmed that an upper mountain track used to run from Holly Flat, skirting the Little Pyramid and linking up to the Kahui Track.

*IT'S POSSIBLE the  
Reverend fell to pieces  
if he went over the falls  
and down the Stony River*

Searchers found evidence that the Reverend had picked up this track in his wanderings in the days after going missing. I wonder if he was plagued with a sense of impending doom.

Things change over the years, of course, not just tracks but also huts; we pass the concrete remains of the old Oaonui Hut before reaching Waiaua Gorge Hut, where we chatted in the firelight with two locals.

My dehy dinner is brown rice, vegetables and an un-dehydratable sachet of flavoured tuna. I decided I could go without the tuna.



Hazel descends the ladder into Waiaua Gorge

## CRUMBLING CLIFF CARCASSES

I was grateful for a warmer, frost-free start the next morning. The mountain was capped with cloud and mist, which soon burned off but made for a moody atmosphere. We opted for the upper track, the Brames Falls Track, which climbs steadily then sharply towards a set of cliffs at around 1300m.

I'd done the Around the Mountain Circuit once before – intending to do it alone, two friends decided to join me, and I recall having a come-to-Jesus moment at these cliffs, thankful I wasn't rolling solo in such foreboding terrain. The occasional piece of rock sits on the track as the cliffs and mountain shed its skin, and we moved swiftly along.

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Taranaki's reflection in Lake Dive rivals the famous Pouakai Tarns reflection

In and out of eroded gullies and down, down to Lake Dive Hut for night three. Lake Dive is named after Bradshaw Dive, an MP for the Reform Party and mountaineer, who claimed he spotted the lake on a summit trip. His companions reckoned it was a mirage, but it was later confirmed. The lake is cold and I'm reliably informed that the bottom is muddy. It's May, we've had frost, and I'm not that keen to find out. It does, however, give a reflection photo opportunity to rival the usual Pouakai Tarn snap from the other side. The western and southern sides are less known, less trodden – and given how rugged and unforgiving the terrain is, I'm not surprised.

Dehy dinner is another serve of brown rice, veges and tuna, and I conclude firmly that the tuna is too much, especially given I have four lines of white chocolate to finish off and I just need the bare bones, really. We chat to hut occupants, retire from the fire, and mentally prepare ourselves for the final push out via the lower track. The forecast looks like it will turn, but perhaps not until the afternoon.

It doesn't happen, of course. After three days of good weather that lulled us into a false sense of windless, cloudless security, Taranaki serves up a dish of un-dehydrated rain and wind, as if to say, don't let the door hit you in the arse on your way out. Taranaki, with a sting in its tail, simply has to have the last word.



## WILD FILE

**Access** North Egmont Visitor Centre

**Grade** Moderate/Difficult

**Distance** 46km

**Total ascent** 3466m

**Time** North Egmont to Kapuni Lodge, 8hr; To Waiaua Gorge Hut, 8hr; To Kahui Hut, 4hr; To Holly Hut, 5hr; To North Egmont, 3.5hr

**Map** BJ29

Find the map and route notes for this trip at [www.wildernessmag.co.nz](http://www.wildernessmag.co.nz)

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## A SURVIVALIST AND AUTHOR

The Reverend was particularly interested in nutrition – namely, how much food you should eat to keep your body in perfect health. His idea was that the barest margin of sustenance was desirable, and he reckoned people could endure severe physical hardships for up to seven days without food.

Murray was writing a 'work' on the topic and his trip up the mountain was intended to be part of a series of experiments on the ability of a man to survive without food. His companions on the day rejected the idea that his sudden mad break from the rest of the party was premeditated, but agreed that the enforced hardships he would endure from having to survive on the mountain would give him plenty of material to test his theories.

"He was incredibly arrogant, wasn't he?" Jean remarked to me, and I couldn't help but agree. I reckon he did it on purpose.

We finish the trip wet but triumphant and as far as aversion therapy goes, it seems to have worked. I've spent a couple of days thinking about a summit trip and perhaps an overnight trip to Syme Hut to bag Fanthams Peak. The mountain is shrouded in mystery, stories to be told, secrets to be unlocked.

Other human remains were discovered on Taranaki during the search for Murray. Three skeletons were found in a cave on the western face of the mountain. But that's a story, and a trip, for another time. 



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**Dave Mitchell** visits  
Reefton where he  
rides an old gold trail  
on the Waiuta to  
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Blacks Point, old mining relics are around every corner

**WE CAN THANK** New Zealand's early gold miners for many of the best mountain bike tracks we ride today. Nowhere is this more apparent than on the South Island's West Coast, and no town is better endowed with historic mining relics, tracks and trails than Reefton.

Reefton began life in 1870 on the opposite bank of the Inangahua River to where it is now. Originally called Quartzopolis, as it grew and migrated across the river its name was changed to reflect the gold-bearing quartz reefs in the surrounding hills. At its industrious peak, Reefton boasted the largest quartz goldfield in the South Island and in 1888 gave birth to the Southern Hemisphere's first commercial electricity supply.

The Big River Track was formed in 1886 to provide mining access to Big River Flats, a remote area in Victoria State Forest. It's now a popular 4WD track that passes a number of old mining claims and the Merrijigs Hotel site. Big River is home to a 20 bunk DOC hut. From Big River, the track magically transforms into technical benched singletrack that winds its way out to Waiuta.

“

**WAIUTA PRODUCED MORE GOLD THAN ANY OTHER WEST COAST MINE AND MUST HAVE FELT LIKE THE CENTRE OF THE UNIVERSE IN ITS HEYDAY.**

From Reefton, head west over the Inangahua River to the town's outskirts and south along the Soldiers Big River Road. The road soon goes gravel and cruises through a small forest of pine and eucalyptus heading east to Progress Junction and the site of an old town. Continue straight across Devils Creek and climb gradually to the start of the Waiuta-Big River Track.

The Track winds its way through tall beech forest passing the Drake Shaft, Golden Lead Mine and A1 Adit. Their wet and uninviting entrances are home to glow worms and the large long-legged weta.

The 4WD trail is rough and rocky in places with plenty of small stream crossings as it ducks and dives through the many damp south-facing gullies on the way out to Big River. There is a final fast descent to the first of three coppery-coloured fords.

Open river flats and five large cyanide tanks mark the start of the Big River mine site. On top of the adjacent terrace, DOC's Big River Hut delivers a great lunch spot and a commanding view of the whole mining operation. The remains of the Big River Mine stamping battery are across the river





A bridge over the Waiuta River, Blacks Point tracks

and only chimneys remain of the old town on the terrace above.

On the adjacent hill, towering over a vertical mine shaft, is one of the Coast's few remaining hardwood poppet head structures. It was used to winch buckets of quartz rock down to the processing plant by the river. The power plant, consisting of two huge boilers and their winding gear, is housed in a modern shed to protect it from the elements. All this can be explored if you have time up your sleeve.

From the hut, head south onto benched singletrack. The trail climbs to a pakihi clearing – an area with such poor soil it cannot support forest growth – and then through open tussock country. The track meanders for a while before returning back into the bush.


At Big River South Mine, the track crosses Sunderland Creek and heads up a side stream before being reunited with the benched track on the terrace above. The track continues to climb, passing numerous mining relics, to the very top of the ridge.

From the ridge-top, the track descends gradually, revealing glimpses

of the Snowy River and expansive Upper Grey River catchment. The descent is leaf litter singletrack at its very best. Regenerating mānuka populates the lower section which eventually pops out onto an old forestry road that's a stone's throw from Waiuta and the Prohibition Mine site.

Waiuta must have felt like the centre of the universe in its heyday, with a vast industrial complex surrounding what was then the deepest mine in New Zealand. Established in 1905, it produced more gold than any other West Coast mine but never gave up all its wealth. In 1951, the wheels fell off when the main ventilation shaft collapsed. The town closed for business soon after but its atmosphere still remains and rumours of it reopening persist.

From Waiuta, the metalled Blackwater Road descends to the tiny settlement of Blackwater from where the Waiuta Road leads to SH7.

With a tailwind and a bit of drafting you will be back to Reefton in time for dinner or you can car shuttle to save your legs. 



### WILD FILE

**Access** From Reefton on Soldiers – Big River Road

**Grade** 3

**Time** 5-7hr

**Distance** Reefton to Waiuta via Waiuta-Big River trail, 55km; Waiuta to Reefton, 25km

**Topo50 map** BS21, BT21

Find the map and route notes for this trip at [www.wildernessmag.co.nz](http://www.wildernessmag.co.nz)

download >



Technical sections over, the group descends Single Cone

# CLIMBING OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE

With a guide calling the shots, longtime trumper **Matthew Cattin** finds his first mountain climb a scary and satisfying experience





I can't remember the last time I put on a pack and felt challenged.

I don't mean challenged in the way a steep incline will have me puffing, sweating, and stopping every few minutes to catch my breath and wipe my brow. With my fitness, that happens often.

I mean a challenge that grabs me by the shoulders and gives me a bone-rattling shake.

A climb of 2319m Single Cone – my first summit over 2000m – proved to be it.

The spring morning was beautiful over Lake Wakatipu, and I awoke feeling nervous.

From Queenstown, The Remarkables' jagged peaks appear impossibly steep – almost 2D – and with zero climbing experience, I was about to climb the highest point on the range.

The opportunity was once in a lifetime – The North Face had invited me to test their new Futurelight gear, and Adventure Consultants had come on board to guide four guests on their first alpine summit. —>





Guide Tony Donaldson leads the climb up the couloir;  
BELOW: Preparing for the technical section



In truth, I was feeling mightily unqualified. Three in the group were experienced rock climbers, and I had only limited experience climbing ladders and trees.

"I'm pretty fresh," I admitted to guides Tony Donaldson and Mark Austin as we tried on boots, harnesses and helmets – me with significantly less confidence than others in the group.

But it was too late for second thoughts, and 10 minutes later, we were piling into the van – nerves or not.

"How many times have you climbed Aspiring now?" Austin asked Donaldson on the dizzyingly windy road to The Remarkables.

"Thirty-three," he replied.

You can't argue with experience.

At the car park, we shouldered our packs and started trekking up the ski field towards Lake Alta, still frozen beneath winter layers.

We donned crampons here, and on the ridge above the lake, our group split in two – Donaldson leading me and climbing buddy Chuck on a gentler route.

Up we climbed, Single Cone never leaving sight or mind. The closer it loomed, the larger, steeper and more intimidating it became.

We eventually reached a slope so steep, it became necessary to tether ourselves together. A fall here would see us slide who knows how far, if unable to self-arrest.

I could tell Donaldson had sensed my nervousness by the increased frequency he asked how I was feeling.

My reply was always "fine", or "good" – not because I felt either, but because I knew I could continue to function in spite of my shaking hands, and that was as fine and good as I was able to be under the circumstances.

We reached an intimidating couloir and kicked a ledge into the slope,

“

**I WAS FEELING MIGHTILY UNQUALIFIED. THREE IN THE GROUP WERE EXPERIENCED ROCK CLIMBERS, AND I HAD ONLY LIMITED EXPERIENCE CLIMBING LADDERS AND TREES.**

securing ourselves to our ice axes buried to their heads in the snow.

As Donaldson prepared to climb on, I stood terrified.

Small ice chunks chinked off the exposed rock face above, slithering down in a serpentine hiss.

If this was a Hollywood movie, this foreshadowing would indicate to viewers a deadly avalanche was moments away – grab your popcorn.

I'm not afraid of heights per se, but falling to my death is always something of a worry, and no amount of reasoning or logic could extinguish the worst-case scenarios burning in my thoughts.

'The guides are experienced, the gear is quality, you'll be caught if you slip,' Reason said.

'You have no experience, no gear is infallible, and are you sure you'll be caught?' Fear replied.

Despite my discomfort, I was relishing this new challenge outside my comfort zone.

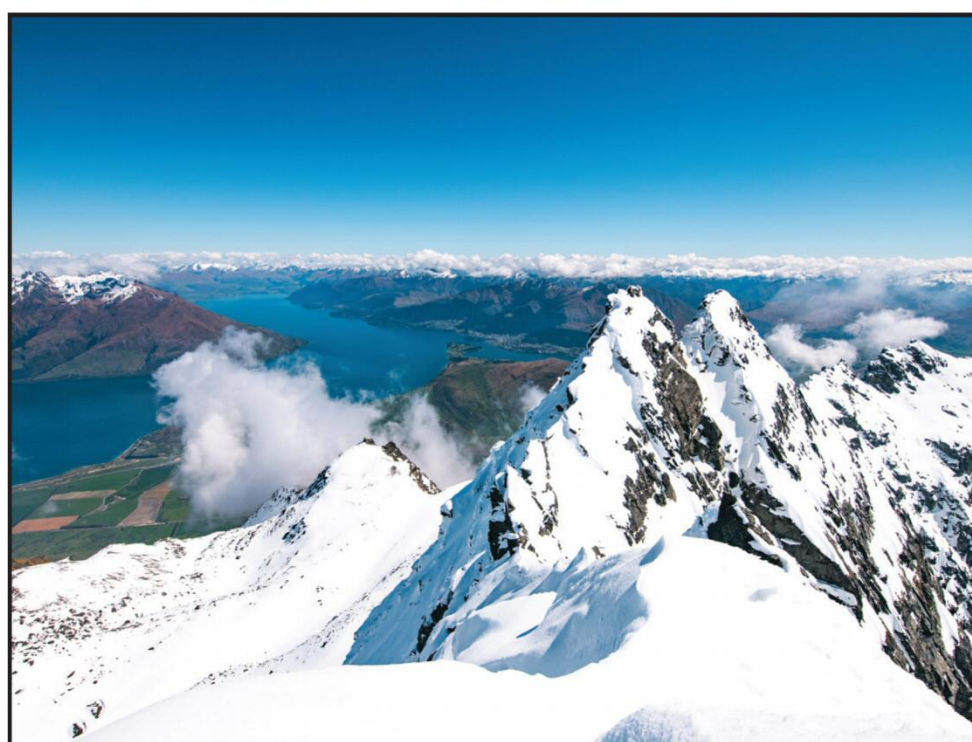
I had to keep pinching myself to prove I was indeed tethered to the side of a snowy mountain, watching my guide climb a ludicrous gradient two kilometres above Queenstown.

Was I feeling challenged? You bet.

After 10 minutes, the rope pulled tight, and Donaldson – now out of sight – called from above, indicating for us to follow.

Chuck set off first in his footsteps, and I followed a few metres below, desperate not to slip and put the rope to the test.





ABOVE: Matt is all smiles on the summit of Single Cone; LEFT: Double Cone and Lake Wakatipu, from the Single Cone summit

Though it seemed too thin to find traction in the snow, the ice axe did its job without a hitch, and my worries shifted to the strike, hold, heave rhythm of the climb.

Several foot holes were fretfully shallow, and trusting my crampons to stick was a test of faith, but with each step up, the rope was hoisted tight from above, and boy was it comforting.

Getting to my feet – albeit shakily – at the top of the couloir was hugely rewarding, but there was more yet to climb, so we pushed on to cross a short saddle to reach the summit.

With a whole lot of nothing either side of the knife-edge saddle, it wasn't a comfortable walk, but thankfully the summit was adequately spacious for our party.

The best part about steep pointed summits is that half of the view remains a mystery until you're standing on the tippy top, overwhelmed by the full 360-degrees.

And overwhelmed I was.

Double Cone – capped in white – dominated the view east, and the lightning bolt corners of Lake Wakatipu were both visible.

Beyond stretched the Southern Alps, with Mt Aspiring standing proudest of all.

My feelings on the summit were a mixed bag – the perspective had me feeling infinite and minuscule, courageous yet anxious, proud but humbled.

I'd climbed a mountain, but one summit does not a climber make and it will be a long time before the mountaintops feel like home for me.

With the day marching on and the snow deteriorating, we started our return journey after 10 minutes on top of the world, and my fears were immediately confirmed – climbing down is harder than climbing up.

What had been a simple two-metre bump on the ascent was now a stressful ordeal of awkward stretching and floundering feet.


The thought of then downclimbing the near-vertical face was not a comforting one at all, but thankfully the plan was to abseil from an anchor point in the rock face.

I haven't abseiled in 15 years, but my intermediate school camp apparently paid off as I felt quite confident lowering myself down the face – even finding the nerve to enjoy myself.

The descent from here was a blur of intense sun, blinding snow and slushy post holes, which frequently devoured my legs past the knee, soaking socks and sapping energy.

By the time we reached the van, I was a mess of exhaustion, hunger and sunburn, but nothing could shake the buzz of my accomplishment – I'd been well outside of my comfort zone, and fulfilled a lifelong dream of standing on a mountain peak.

I'm not sure I'll make a habit of clinging to the sides of icy mountains. As with bungee jumping, I loved the experience but I think once might be enough.

I'm happy enough to keep looking up in wonder from the relative safety of New Zealand's tramping tracks. 



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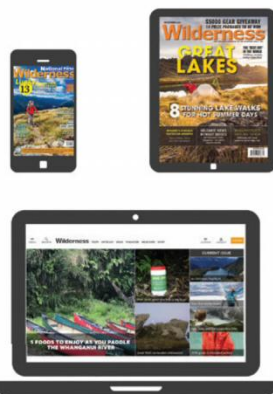
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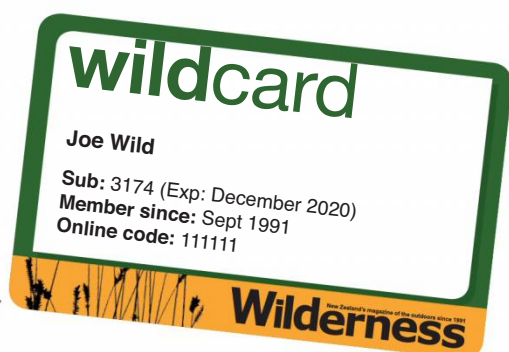
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# WAR OF *the* WILDINGS

New Zealand is waging a weeding war against exotic wilding conifers, and a cash injection from the government might see the turning of the tides. By **Matthew Cattin**

---

**T**here's an army advancing across New Zealand's landscape that crosses rivers, lakes and mountain ranges with ease.

Left unchallenged, the steady march will cover the country in unwanted exotic wilding conifers, superseding native forests and smothering open valleys, riverbeds and farmland.

Currently covering more than 1.8 million hectares of land, it's estimated that wilding conifers are spreading at a rate of five per cent a year, and will cover one-fifth of New Zealand within two decades without action.

Rowan Sprague is on the front lines of the fight, having graduated from Lincoln University with a PhD in wilding conifers and slipped into her dream role as NZ Wilding Conifer Group coordinator.

Aside from their alarming rate of reproduction, it's the wide range of landscapes wildings can take root in that makes them such a threat, Sprague says.

"They'll invade a lot of different ecosystems. They can find their way into the alpine areas of mountains, on scree slopes growing above the native treeline, and they might find their way into dunelands and

geothermal systems, too."

The 'highly adaptive' wildings – which include several subspecies of pine, fir and larch – can drastically change the ecosystems they inhabit, and, if left, take over native flora and evict native fauna.

"Once they have invaded, it's very hard to get the ecosystem back to what it was before, and once it's lost, it's lost – it's not a reversible process – so there is a real time pressure there for trying to control them," Sprague says.

"You feel like a bit of a warrior of the backcountry when you're doing your part."

For many Kiwis, the government's \$100 million plan to control wildings may have been the first wake up call to the severity of the problem in New Zealand.

With introduced mammals tending to hog the conservation spotlight, awareness is something of an uphill battle, and the very fact that trees can be hugely destructive to the environment goes against natural instinct, Sprague says. "We're pushing up against a human psychology thing where people see a green tree and think 'oh good, things are great, nature is doing well'."



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A Douglas fir seedling,  
ripped from the ground





ABOVE: The Bishopdale Tramping Club getting stuck in near Lake Grasmere; BELOW: NZ Wilding Conifer Group coordinator Rowan Sprague



The funding – which has already created much-needed jobs for tourism and hospitality workers – is the largest investment in wilding conifer control to date, and it comes not a moment too soon for conservationists.

“We’ve been asking for that amount of money so it’s awesome to feel listened to and to know there has been recognition of the severity of the issue,” Sprague says.

“We won’t be able to do everything, but we will definitely be able to do a lot of work.”

For many, the work has already begun, and some conservation groups are already seeing the light at the end of the tunnel after hard-fought campaigns.

As chair of the Waimakariri Ecological and Landscape Restoration Alliance (WELRA), Ray Goldring has been fighting wildings in the Flock Hill and Craigieburn area for over a decade.

“If we didn’t start when we did, there are huge iconic landscapes throughout the area, like the Castle Hill and Flock

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NOT A REVERSIBLE  
PROCESS”**

Hill Rocks, that would be covered by a 4-5m tall forest by now,” he says.

WELRA was formed in 2008 by an agglomeration of proactive locals keen to prevent more of their landscape from being devoured by invasive greenery.

The alliance secured funding from the New Zealand Lottery Fund, DOC and others, and developed a long term plan to remove wildings and prevent their return.

It’s a shining example of what can be done with effort and financial backing, Goldring says.

The programme implemented three phases, beginning with the removal of seed source trees.

The second – and still ongoing – phase tackles the second wave of wilding saplings which sprout five to seven years after the seeds have taken to ground.

“It’s like the saying; a stitch in time saves nine – if you get in early before the trees start seeding, it saves many more trees as a result,” Goldring says.

The third and hopefully final phase will pick up any straggler trees missed, and ongoing observations will keep on top of the problem.

It’s a long game, but the consequences of doing nothing are ‘beyond imagination’, Goldring says.

“It just spreads – the seeds from *pinus contorta* can travel 10-15km away from the seed source.”

Thankfully, WELRA isn’t alone in its mission to wipe out wildings.

“A number of the [Castle Hill] villagers are taking saws with them when they are tramping or mountain biking, and if they see one, they’ll stop and cut it down – it’s becoming more of a regular occasion,” Goldring says.

School, tertiary and community groups are also lending a hand, as well as local tramping clubs which commit to a number of days and volunteers each year.

“I direct them to the areas where they can do wilding control, and Environment Canterbury funds their travel, and gives a donation to the clubs,” Goldring says.

Bishopdale Tramping Club has provided WELRA with eager hands since 2014.

“We do a lot of tramping in the Craigieburn area, and we were horrified at what the wildings were doing to the landscape,” club member Chris Snook says.

The 80-strong club – which walks together every Wednesday – began coordinated wilding weeding days with Goldring, concentrating their efforts on specific patches of growth.

“[Goldring] will give us an area, and we will organise up to 20 people to go up on a weekday, and we will just go for it,” Snook says.

It’s a satisfying job for members, and the conservation effort extends to their time on the trail.

“You can get most out with a pocket knife if they’re not too big, so whenever we’re tramping, we’re always looking out,” he says.

Snook is thrilled to see the post-Covid influx of workers weeding the Craigieburn, newly employed under the government’s recovery scheme.

“It’s brilliant – it’s exactly the sort of work we’ve been doing for years,” he said.





Wilding conifers have established themselves on the banks of the Waikato River

## HOW TO REMOVE A WILDING

Rowan Sprague of the NZ Wilding Conifer Group explains the best way for trampers to deal with rogue wildings in the backcountry.

- If the wilding is a small seedling, it's best to pull it up. Make sure to pull up all of it – roots included.
- If the wilding is too big to pull up, it's best to saw or chop it off at the base as close to the ground as possible. You can use a handsaw or a pair of loppers. Clear leaf litter or grasses around the base to get close to the ground. Once the seedling or sapling has been cut down, remove any green needles attached to the trunk to prevent the tree growing back.
- If the wilding is too big to cut with loppers or a hand-saw, take a photo, note the location, and report it to the regional council or DOC. "We are really excited for people to be involved in wilding pine control but we also want everyone to be safe, so people should only do what they feel comfortable doing and not push their limits."

Ngati Tahu-Ngati Whaoa Runanga Trust has also been working towards wilding eradication within their rohe (iwi boundary) for years – joining the fight in 2013.

The trust protects a stretch of land east of Taupō, including the Orakei Korako geothermal area, Paeroa Range and a segment of the Waikato River, north of Huka Falls.

Wilding conifers are a threat to the area's geothermal waahi tapu (sacred sites), says the trust's environmental manager Evelyn Forrest.

"The Ngati Tahu-Ngati Whaoa rohe is rich with our history and resources, and wilding conifers pose a threat to them all – waterways, geothermal features and native bush, of which we have very little left within our rohe," she says.


"Wildings are able to thrive in such harsh environments, whereas most natives are slow growing – especially around geothermal sites.

"The biggest threat is that they can topple over, and take a geothermal feature with them."

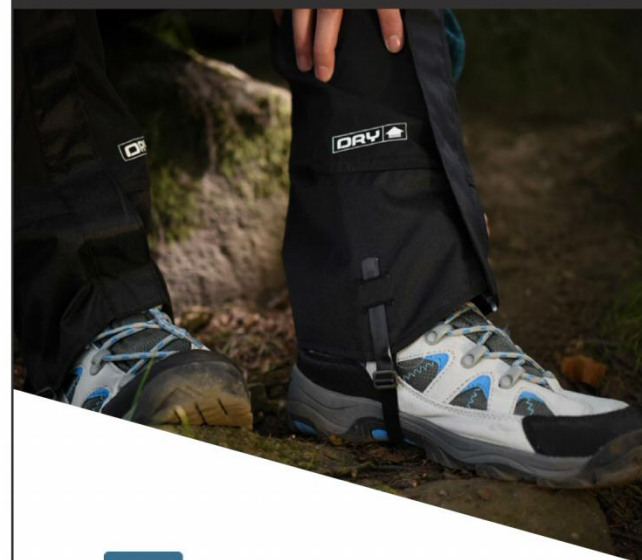
Wilding clusters growing on the banks of the Waikato River are also problematic, as they can topple into the river and cause sediment buildup and erosion.

The trust has teamed up with Waikato Regional Council and DOC to tackle the problem.

"Rather than recreating the wheel, we're working with partners that will bring knowledge and experience to the table to help us manage the issue," Forrest says.

"It's good that more people are becoming aware of the magnitude of issues that wilding pines create, and how they will get out of control if we don't start now." 

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# Skills

## TRACK MARKERS

Track markers help identify the path you need to follow. However, there are a few tricks and tips you need to be aware of. By **Heather Grady**

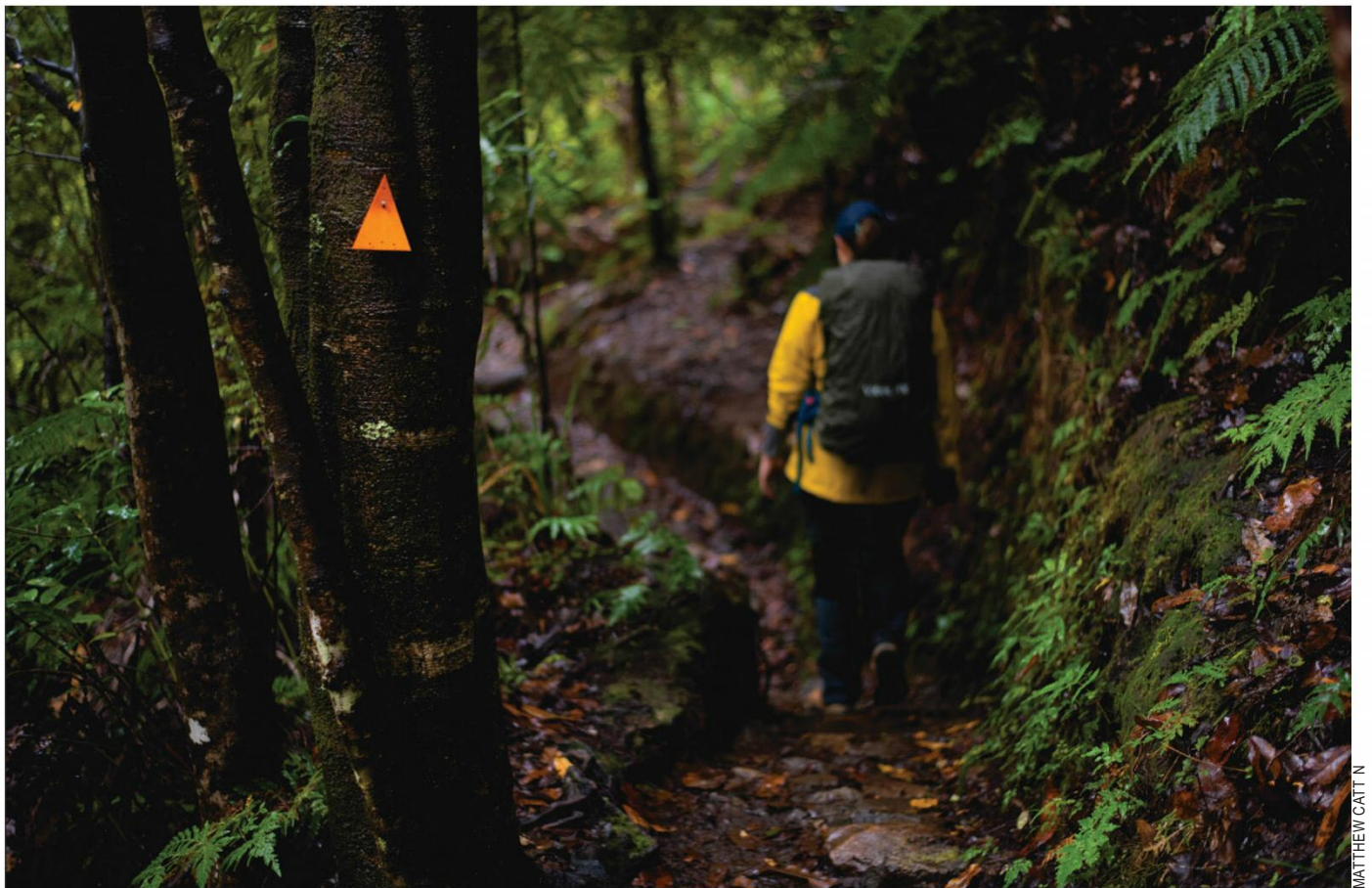
**THE DEPARTMENT** of Conservation uses orange triangles to mark track direction. If you haven't seen one for a while, take a moment to consider why.

Sometimes they are spaced further apart, and tracks that have been rerouted around slips or windfall may not be marked. Sometimes the marker drops off, or the tree it is on falls over. But losing sight of the orange markers also means you may have inadvertently strayed off the path.

### YOU'RE OFF TRACK, NOW WHAT?

If you haven't seen a marker for a while, look around. Is there an obvious track? Check the map. What other clues do you have? Are you still beside the river you are following?

If you are confident you are on the track, carry on looking for markers and other clues to confirm this. If you're not confident, retrace your steps to the last marker. Look around as you go, you may spot the point at which you left the track. If not, once back at your last marker try again following the track, taking great care noting your surroundings and the map. Never be afraid to turn back if you are not confident you have the skills to follow a track with sparse markers.



Orange track markers are positioned to point the way

### MARKERS SHOULD MAKE IT EASY

If a track crosses a river or stream, or follows the bed of a river or stream for a period, the point of exit is usually marked by an extra-large orange marker. When the track passes through a clearing, a large orange marker may be used to show where the track re-enters the bush. Keep a lookout for this, sometimes it can become hidden by vegetation.

Seeing orange track markers gives you confidence that you are on a track, but are you on the track you're meant to be on? Many people have found themselves on the wrong track and continued following that until they got into difficulty.

Markers are just one clue to help ensure you are going the right way, but they don't replace a map and other location clues.

### MULTI-COLOURED MARKERS

Markers of other colours such as pink, blue and yellow are used for pest control and many people have become lost by following the wrong coloured marker. Tracks maintained by other authorities, such as regional councils, may use a variety of colours and types of markers.

Coloured tape is used regularly by hunters or pest controllers – they may be used to improve track marking when there are gaps, especially to mark a new track around a slip or along poorly formed sections of track. You may come across a range of other markers. Some historical markers you may find include pieces of Venetian blind or jam jar lids.

- Heather Grady is an instructor with Outdoor Training New Zealand



**Wild  
CUISINE**

# NOT MINCE ON TOAST

This childhood favourite  
is a great alternative  
to mince on toast.  
By **Maddy Bellcroft**

**I HAVE STRONG** memories from when I was little of eating bacon flavoured TVP (textured vegetable protein) by the bucket load while somewhere up the Young Valley about five days into a family adventure. Now that I have to carry my own food I can understand why my parents used so much of it.

TVP is made from soy and is a lightweight, shelf-stable option for tramping trips. It's high in protein and doesn't turn to mush in your pack. The most important thing when cooking TVP is to ensure that it rehydrates fully – otherwise it can make you feel bloated.



MADDY BELLCROFT

## PROFILE

**Prep time** 10min  
**Cook time** 10min  
**Serves** 2  
**Cost** \$5-7

## RECIPE

**1 cup** TVP  
**1/3 cup** dehydrated peas  
**1 1/4 cup** boiling water  
**1 tsp** olive oil  
**1 small** onion  
**1** clove garlic  
**2 tbsp** tomato paste  
**1/2 tsp** smoked paprika  
**1 tsp** veggie stock powder  
**1.5 cups** water  
  
Salt and pepper  
Toast of choice and  
grated cheese to serve

## METHOD

Pour 1 1/4 cups of boiling water over the TVP and dehydrated peas, and soak covered for 20min.

Dice onion and garlic and fry in olive oil for 3min until starting to brown.

Add soaked TVP mixture, tomato paste, paprika and veggie stock along with an additional 1 1/2 cups of water and bring to a simmer for about 10min until water is mostly absorbed and the mixture thickens. Taste and add salt and pepper as desired.

Spoon on top of toast and sprinkle with a little cheese to serve.





MATTHEW CATTIN

A basic first aid kit doesn't take up much space and can be carried on all trips

## KIT OUT YOUR FIRST AID

A well-stocked first-aid kit will get you through most tramping incidents – and it's also a great way to make friends, writes **Matthew Cattin**

**TIME SPENT** working in a pharmacy meant my mum wouldn't let me go bush without stocking me out like a Red Cross medic. Without fail, I would argue each item's necessity and weight, and no doubt sneak a few things back when she wasn't looking. But despite my 'know-it-all' packing tantrums, you can bet your life I was the most stocked kid on Duke of Ed expeditions, dishing out bandaids, painkillers and blister plasters to those in need. Long story short, when you're packing your first aid kit, don't be like Matt – be like Matt's mum, and make sure you're prepared for anything.

**Medical tape:** Perhaps the most versatile tool in your kit, medical tape can be used to quiet blisters, ease strains and reinforce bandaids – it's also a decent temporary fix for damaged gear or boot delamination. You can also pack duct tape instead. Jo Verheijen from First Training says she never leaves home without duct tape. "I always wrap it around my drink bottle – it has multiple uses," she says.

**Medication bag:** Verheijen recommends taking a few tabs of useful medications in an easy access ziplock bag. Even without injury, tramping can be misery, so you'd be wise to pack suitable painkillers. Antihistamine for pollen allergies and insect stings are essential and can greatly subdue the

severity of reactions. Ibuprofen anti-inflammatory tablets reduce swelling from sprains and can relieve tired joints on the trail. Aspirin can be a lifesaver in the event of a heart attack, and Verheijen recommends packing some, regardless of your age.

**Antiseptic:** For cleaning wounds and reducing infection risk, you'll want to stock a decent antiseptic, whether it be spray, cream or wipes.

**Adhesive strips:** Steri or butterfly strips are a useful inclusion for deeper cuts, and can hold a wound together.

**Antibiotic ointment:** Infection is the enemy. After cleaning a wound, apply a topical antibiotic treatment and cover. For day hikes, however, Verheijen would leave this behind to cut weight.

**Dressings:** Pack an assortment of bandaids, dressing pads and gauze to cover a range of cuts and grazes. "What's really good is sanitary pads," Verheijen says.

**Splinter probes:** For stubborn splinters and blisters, a splinter probe is easier to handle than a needle – and it's sterile. In a pinch, however, a sterile needle is a good alternative and when combined with cotton thread, it's perfect for on-the-go gear repairs.

**Safety pins:** Another lightweight multi-use item, safety pins are perfect for securing bandages, making slings and also for gear repair.

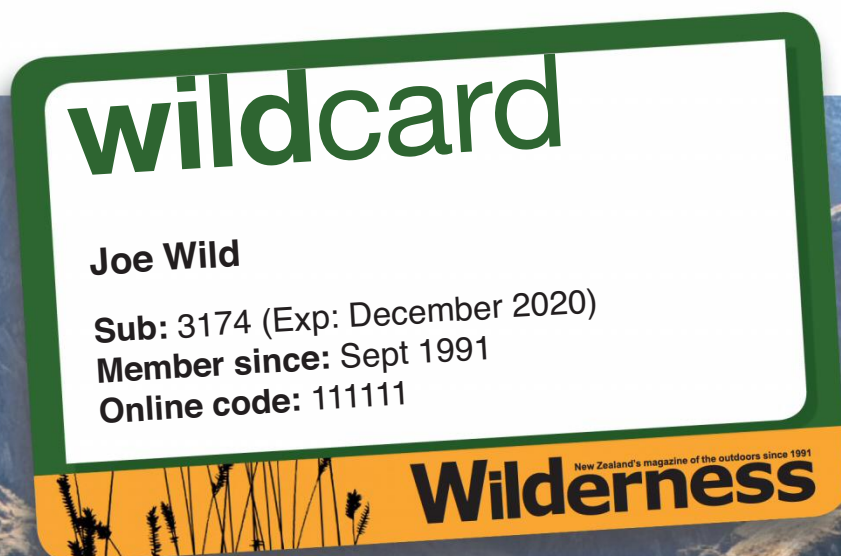
**Crepe bandages:** A good bandage can work wonders on a sprained limb, reducing movement and lowering the risk of further injury.

**Emergency blanket:** Another item Verheijen never leaves home without. An emergency blanket will reduce heat loss, and can be a life-saver in the bush. **w**



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# A HAPPY CAMPER

How one trumper made sure he chose the right tent.  
By **Darryl Ward**

**LAST YEAR**, I needed to buy my first tent. I understood little about modern tents but knew there was an enormous selection. How would I choose the right one?

I already knew why I wanted a tent. I wanted the freedom to go into the wilderness on my own (mainly the Tararua Range) without being restricted to using huts. And I wanted a shelter that would cope with nasty surprises; I have seen a lovely summer day transform into a misty gale with sleet and minimal visibility in just a few minutes while on the way to Kime Hut.

I listed what was most important to me in a tent. I wanted a one-person shelter that offered durability, minimal weight, and optimal living space, at an affordable price. Now I had to find it.

I went on a crash course in the bewildering world of tent design. I educated myself on fabrics, learning the pros and cons of nylon and polyester, and the meanings of ripstop and denier. I familiarised myself with the pros and cons of the various shapes. Only then was I ready to start looking.

After searching for tents on the websites of outdoor stores and online retailers, I had a list of more than 20 tents from more than a dozen manufacturers.

Six especially caught my attention. The Gunya 1, at \$230, was the least expensive but also the heaviest single-person tent, weighing 1800g. In the end, I could not find a local retailer that stocked it, and I did not want to buy a tent I had not seen in the flesh.

Even though it was a two-person tent, I seriously considered the Macpac Minaret because of its generous living space. But I ultimately decided I did not want to carry the extra weight.

I liked the MSR Hubba NX V7, but retailing for more than \$850 it was beyond my budget and I also wasn't too sure about the strength of the floor.

MURRAY SHORT



Darryl Ward with his new Microlight tent

The North Face Stormbreak 1 (\$300, 1500g) appealed for its more reasonable price tag. But it too was eliminated, mainly because I liked my final two choices better.

They were the Macpac Microlight, a tried and trusted classic, and the Macpac Sololight, a relatively new kid on the block. Brand favouritism was not the reason for the final two coming from the same brand. They just both ticked all my boxes and I really liked the multi-pitch design and solid tub floors. And they were both priced nicely thanks to a '40 per cent off' sale.

The Microlight weighs 1600g and is the heavier of the two by 300g. It was also slightly more expensive at a discounted price of \$430 compared to \$350 for the Sololight. But neither of these factors was enough to make any real difference.

The Microlight is made from slightly more durable fabrics. It also looked like it would be easier to pitch – an important consideration even though it had not been on my list of what mattered.

The Sololight's main advantage was better living space. Despite having a slightly smaller floor area, it offered greater internal volume because of its shape.

I read every review I could find. Consulted with tramping friends. Sought advice from online tramping groups. And asked questions in store.

Focusing on my original purpose

– the freedom to tramp alone without being restricted to sleeping in huts with a shelter that could cope with nasty surprises – made my decision easy. Durability took priority over living space and weight; being fractionally more cramped and having an extra few hundred grams to carry was preferable to being caught out in a storm in a tent that might not cope.

I got the sales staff to pitch the Microlight in store so I could see how well I could fit in it with a selection of my gear. While I could readily see how the limpet shape reduced the internal volume, there was still more than enough space for me and my essentials. I went home the happy owner of a brand new Microlight.

After a couple of test runs, including a night of heavy downpours, the tent has kept me warm and dry in the Orongorongos and Tararuas.

I followed a strategy to ensure I made a sound decision. I made sure I was certain why I wanted a tent. I prioritised what was important to me. Then I researched materials and designs. This enabled me to consider many options and narrow them down to those that would work for me.

If an outdoor equipment purchase decision ever seems too complicated, you can ensure you buy what you need if you confirm your purpose, establish what is important for you, and do your research. Then you can narrow down the options to those that best fit your criteria. **W**

***I wanted the freedom to tramp alone with a shelter that could COPE with nasty surprises***



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# WHAT'S IN MY PACK

Jan Finlayson is the president of the Federated Mountain Clubs and is content – perfectly so – in the hills of Canterbury and Otago. Here's what she packs.

## COOKING

My MSR PocketRocket is super compact and works well at reasonable altitude such as at Wright Col (2264m). The ancient billy I cart round is great for filling up with squashes. And while my Swiss Army Knife is pretty big, its extra features make it good for more than slicing veges (there's satisfaction in taking the mini saw to exotic broom). Also, a titanium bowl and spoon.

## SLEEPING

I have a Kathmandu Pathfinder sleeping bag, a much-used, never-patched Kathmandu inflatable sleeping mat, and The Palace – my new Macpac Olympus tent.

## PACK

I use a Macpac Ascent 70 litre, which I always manage to squeeze everything into, despite my aiming half my wardrobe at it. It's comfortable and durable. I also use a plastic pack liner.

## CLOTHING

I'm a lizard, so I always take more clothing than anyone else. On any trip (even day trips in summer), I'll have two pairs of gloves, spare socks, a warm hat, and a neck gaiter – just in case – as well as everything else. My Arc'teryx jacket is great.

## FOOTWEAR

My light Garmont boots have been a long way with me and have always treated me well. Ditto my above-the-snowline Meindl Eiger GTX boots. I've been experimenting with running shoes and long socks and found this to be a good combo for the Hodder Valley recently. I think my Cactus gaiters might outlive me.

## ABOVE THE SNOWLINE

Crampons, axe, helmet. I'm always happy to get this stuff on my pack. Actually, when not in use, it lives opportunistically in the back of the car.

## FIRST AID

Heel tape, butterflies, antihistamine, bandaging, bandaids, analgesics, cut-down toothbrush (I don't know how little of The Palace that discarded handle offsets), and a rescue blanket. The Swiss Army Knife comes out of the billy for tape-cutting duties.

## TOP OF THE PACK

Sunscreen, lip balm, compass and map, hand sanitiser, light gloves, head torch, pen, spare bottle cap and bootlace, and liquorice allsorts (a food group of its own).



# BROKEN IN

Wilderness staff and gear reviewers test their kit for you.

**Fjallraven  
Kaipak 38**  
\$399



**Used by:** Sentimental  
editor Alistair Hall  
**Used for:** Occasionally  
over 18 months



During the lockdown, I re-visited my gear cupboard and gave my various packs a clean.

Scrubbing the Kaipak 38 brought back fond memories of my last winter's trip on the Tongariro Northern Circuit.

Made from G-1000 HeavyDuty Eco fabric – an indestructible canvas – it easily handled the sharp points of my crampons which I somewhat carelessly strapped to the pack, handled being dumped in snow, scree and mud, and bush-bashing down Taranaki Stream.

When I first reviewed this pack, I noted that even though it weighed 700g, that weight was reasonable for a pack that can carry enough gear for a long-weekend camping trip and through rugged terrain.

I've given it some tough treatment since and the only addition to that comment I would make is that it would be more comfortable with firmer hip and shoulder strap padding. I carried a load of around 11kg on the TNC and by trip's end (it's 43km and I walked it in two long days) the padding felt too compressed and I was eager to throw it off.

But it was super stable during my off-track excursions which required down-climbing waterfalls and bashing through scrub.

Despite its drawbacks, I find myself drawn to it for a couple of reasons: the capacity is perfect for two or three-day trips, and it's a pack that will last my lifetime – which is why it costs so much money – and these days when everything seems so fragile and uncertain, there's something to be said for that.

**VERDICT**  
**A HARD-WEARING  
OVERNIGHT PACK FOR  
SENTIMENTAL TYPES**

**Outdoor  
Research Helium  
bivvy bag** \$299



**Used by:** Backup-conscious  
features and trips writer  
Hazel Phillips  
**Used for:** Three years



I picked up the OR Helium for a long solo trip where I planned to stay in huts but wanted extra security without having to carry a full tent.

The Helium is the little brother to the heavier Alpine bivvy but it does the job in three-season conditions just fine. I love the mesh to keep the bugs out and the simple single-pole construction that keeps the tent fabric away from your face.

I've also added a tent peg to keep it anchored.

There's plenty of room at the foot and I've found it to have a good balance of waterproofness and breathability. I've used it mostly by choice (bivvying out beside exquisite rivers or avoiding an overcrowded hut) and a couple of times after deciding to call it a day before reaching the hut.

At 459g it's a no-brainer to throw in my pack when I'm heading somewhere off the beaten track.

**VERDICT**  
**A LIGHTWEIGHT  
BUT RELIABLE  
BACKUP SHELTER**

**Therm-a-Rest  
Women's NeoAir  
Xlite** \$429.99



**Used by:** Fussy mattress  
user Jo Stilwell  
**Used for:** Two years

Because most of my nights in the hills are spent in a tent, I'm very fussy about my sleeping mat.

After a lot of trial and error, I finally found the (almost) perfect mat in the NeoAir Xlite air mattress.

It's very light (340g) and extremely small when packed. The women's-specific version is slightly warmer and smaller than the regular version. It's still a good length (168cm) and I can lie stretched out on my back and it's more than wide and thick enough for a comfortable side sleep. While it's sold as a three-season mat with an R-Value of 3.9, I've used it on many winter trips in heavy frosts.

I say it's the 'almost' perfect mat because if I was buying again, I would buy the Therm-a-Rest Neo-Air X-Therm for its extra warmth (R-value 7.2) so I can camp on snow.

This mat came with a good warranty – I had mine replaced when the valve started leaking after two years.



**VERDICT**  
**A COMPACT,  
LIGHT AND  
COMFORTABLE  
MATTRESS  
SUITABLE  
FOR MOST  
CONDITIONS  
EXCEPT  
FOR SLEEPING  
ON SNOW**



# OVERNIGHT PACKS

Three very different packs that work best on overnight excursions.

By **Matthew Cattin**

## *Aarn Active Endeavour 26 plus Universal Balance Bags*

**\$199 + \$139 / 900g + 572g /  
26-litres + 24-litres**

**FEATURES:** This pack is made out of a sturdy 210D ripstop nylon. It's a no-frills, zip-opening pack with an extra zipped front pocket and two side stretch pockets. The Velcro adjustable back length allows 10cm of movement, and the hip belt has a dual-adjust system, allowing fine-tuning around the waist. A hydration reservoir pocket, hook and tube exit allows bladder use, and the pack includes a tuck-away rain cover and walking pole attachment loops. The Universal Balance Bags (12l each) extend the pack capacity to 50l. Each bag includes two front mesh pockets, and a zipped main pocket, with an integrated internal waterproof liner. **5/5**

**FIT:** The pack was easy to get comfortable and the adjustment options should suit most body shapes. The dual-adjust hip belt allows fine-tweaking on the top and bottom of the belt – it works well, once you're used to it. **5/5**

**COMFORT:** Loaded with around 8kg, the pack was extraordinarily comfortable, and the balance perfect. On a 20km day, I never felt the urge to dump the pack during breaks, and my shoulders, back and hips didn't complain. The balance bags look awkward, but the weight is directed to the hips by an aluminium stay and I barely noticed their presence. **5/5**



**AT A  
GLANCE**



Spacious balanced pack system with on the go access



Ventilation issues

**IN USE:** The tramping world seems divided into those who've tried and converted to Aarn packs, and those who make fun of the 'breast bags'. I experienced both during my testing, but after experiencing the versatility and convenience of the balance pockets, I'm a firm convert and staunch defender of the bags. Walking the Tongariro Alpine Crossing, I could fit my day's food into one, a camera lens into the other and could access both on the go with ease. I felt a noticeable improvement in balance on the uneven terrain and scree slopes when compared to a traditional backpack.

My back stayed clammy due to average ventilation, but the balance bags hang away from the chest, so no problems there. With weight in the balance bags, the pack is a bit awkward to handle when you're not wearing it. **4/5**

**Value:** A well priced and versatile package. **4/5**

**Verdict:** Superbly balanced and comfortable pack system – try it to discover what the fuss is all about. **4.6**

## *Lowe Alpine AirZone Trek 35:45*

**\$379.95 / 1600g / 45-litres**

**FEATURES:** This pack is made out of 210D ripstop nylon with a water-resistant DWR treatment. It features comfortable FormKnit technology which suspends the pack from the back to provide ventilation. A sturdy foam lumbar pad provides lower back support. Front and side mesh pockets and a roomy lid offer packing options. Dedicated attachments hold walking poles and an ice axe. It also includes a water reservoir compartment and an extendable lid. **5/5**

**FIT:** Attaining a good fit is easy thanks to the simple Velcro length-adjuster, which can be accessed via the front U-zip. The shoulder straps and harness all sit where they should, and are easy to adjust and tweak. **5/5**

**COMFORT:** This is a very comfortable pack. The FormKnit suspension fits snugly against the back, providing ventilation and padding, and the lumbar support – though firm – felt comfortable all day. The harness was secure and never came close to bruising or rubbing. **5/5**

**IN USE:** At 1600g, it's a heavy pack for its capacity, but it feels sturdy and should stand up well to wear. The front U-zip provides easy access to the interior. A zippable inner divider allows users to create a separate compartment for sleeping gear, but it can't be zipped off altogether if unwanted. Likewise, the lid is attached to the pack by a nylon ribbon, which I would be tempted to cut so I could use the pack without the lid.





#### AT A GLANCE



Very comfortable, resilient and water-resistant



Heavy and expensive

The front mesh pocket adds decent volume, and two side sleeves are large enough to securely hold water bottles. The rain cover – stored in a pocket at the base of the pack – performed well and the straps and harness were quick-drying.

Though well-built, its bells and whistles verge on excessive and add – in my view – unnecessary weight. And don't be fooled by the 35:45 capacity – whether it carries 35l or 45l, you're carrying a 45l pack. You can't leave 10l of your pack behind, as you can using a pack with a detachable lid. **3/5**

**Value:** It's priced at the high end of similar capacity packs, but it feels built to last. **3/5**

**Verdict:** A comfortable – but heavy – pack suitable for overnight or multi-day trips. **4.2**



#### AT A GLANCE



Lightweight, full suspension system



Comfort issues, impractical pockets

## The North Face Hydra 38

**\$350 / 1020g / 38-litres**

**FEATURES:** This pack uses a water-resistant 70D nylon fabric and T6 aluminium frame to keep weight low. Two large mesh pockets will fit drink bottles or gear, and a large front stash pocket can stow gear outside the pack. Two zipped hip pockets hold snacks and two tool keepers keep axes and poles in place. The Dyno Lift System allows quick on-the-go shoulder strap adjustment, and the suspension system provides ventilation. It also includes a water reservoir compartment, gear loops and a chest buckle emergency whistle. **5/5**

**FIT:** The trampoline suspension and shoulder straps fit well, and the Dyno Lift System allows users to adjust the fit of both shoulder straps with one hand, relieving some of the weight from your hips. But the harness feels narrow across the small of the back and the hip belt doesn't sit flush with the suspension webbing, which made me feel too wide for the pack. **3/5**

**COMFORT:** From the waist up, the Hydra 38 is a comfortable pack. The trampoline suspension allows excellent ventilation and rests softly against the back. The only downside to the pack's comfort is where the hip belt joins the back panel. Though it didn't rub or cause pain, it felt too tight. **4/5**

**IN USE:** The pack is light for its capacity and its narrow profile keeps the weight flush against your back which improves balance and posture. The aluminium frame provides rigidity and makes packing and unpacking easier. The mesh side pockets are roomy, but would be better suited to carrying loose gear, rather than a full drink bottle which may be too tall for the pocket. My one-litre bottle slumped forwards into my elbow every few minutes which drove me crazy, and had I leaned forward to duck under a branch, I'm not confident the bottle would have remained in the pocket.

Overall, the pack seems durable, despite its weight, and the decision to use a nylon stash pocket – rather than mesh – will improve longevity. **3/5**

**Value:** It's a reasonable price for a lightweight overnighter. **4/5**

**Verdict:** A comfortable and lightweight overnighter pack let down by a few design flaws. **3.8**



# OUTDOOR SOCKS

Investing in a good pair of outdoor socks will pay dividends as they cushion feet on rough trails and help keep them blister-free.

- Alistair Hall



**Featured sock:**  
Bridgedale Hike Midweight  
Merino Performance (\$42.99).  
Distributed by e.ampro.co.nz

## MOISTURE MANAGEMENT

The primary purpose of outdoor socks is to keep feet dry. As feet sweat – up to a cup of water a day from a pair of feet – socks draw moisture away from the foot and into the lining of the boots. The moisture passes through the lining and is then released into the air.

## CONSTRUCTION

Socks should fit snugly and stay put when they're on. An elasticated arch and ankle prevent the sock sliding forward and bunching around the toes. The weave – in various thicknesses and knits – creates airspace against the skin to help keep feet dry and move moisture into the boot lining.

## SEAMS

Chafe-free seams lay flat against the skin to reduce pressure points and rubbing.

## COMFORT

Padding is provided in key areas like the heel, arch, toes and shin to soften the impact of trail walking and absorb pressure from your footwear.

## VENTILATION

Ventilation panels help feet remain cool and dry by speeding up the wicking process.

## FIT

Try different pairs to make sure the fit is spot on – excess material can lead to rubbing which could cause blisters.

**TIP:** lay a sock along your forearm – the length of your forearm from inside elbow to wrist should be the same length as your foot.

## COMPOSITION

All socks have different blends of synthetic and natural fibres. The exact mix will determine the quality, durability and comfort of the sock. Here's what the various fibres do:

**WOOL:** Insulates the foot and helps control moisture. Merino is naturally odour-resistant.

**LYCRA, SPANDEX,**

**ELASTANE:** Provide elasticity to keep socks up.

**NYLON:** Adds durability.

**SYNTHETIC MATERIALS:** Wick moisture to keep feet dry.

## DOUBLE-LAYERED SOCKS

A double-layered sock is most often used with waterproof models. They feature a waterproof outer and a normal sock inner. An extra layer is also used in some models to reduce blister-causing friction.





1



2



3



4



5



6



7

#### 1- Dexshell Trekking Sock \$79.99

Waterproof and breathable, Porelle lining, mid-calf length, close-fitting. **Construction Inner:** 40% merino wool, 40% anti-pilling acrylic, 20% nylon. **Outer:** 97% abrasion resistant nylon, 2% elastane, 1% elastics. [www.dexshell.co.nz](http://www.dexshell.co.nz)

#### 2- Bridgedale Storm Sock Midweight \$74.99

Waterproof boot length sock with a dense merino terry cushioned footbed, heel and ankle. **Composition Inner:** 54% merino wool, 36% polyester, 7.5% nylon/polyamide, 2.5% Lycra/elastane. **Outer:** 95% nylon/polyamide, 5% Lycra/elastane. [e.ampro.co.nz](http://e.ampro.co.nz)

#### 3- Thorlos Mountaineering \$54.90

For sub-zero temperatures, thick cushioning in ball and heel, moderate cushioning at ankle, shin, instep and arch. Stretch yarns in the arch, 100% wool toe, calf-length. **Composition** 60% Worsted wool, 26% Thor-Lon acrylic, 11% nylon, 2% spandex. [www.thorlos.co.nz](http://www.thorlos.co.nz)

#### 4- Bridgedale Explorer Heavyweight Merino Performance \$49.99

Expedition sock for extended use backpacking, tramping and walking. Dense cushioning throughout provides warmth and impact resistance. Combination of natural and synthetic yarns for dry, blister-free feet. **Composition** 28% merino wool, 19% new wool, 34% nylon, 18% Endurofil, 1% Lycra. [e.ampro.co.nz](http://e.ampro.co.nz)



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#### 5- Wrightsock Adventure \$49.99

Double layer, stabiliser zone locks sock in place, mesh panel, thick padding, no-blister guarantee. **Composition Inner:** 70% Dri-Wright II polyester, 26% nylon, 4% Lycra. **Outer:** 74% Dri-Wright II polyester, 20% nylon, 6% Lycra. [www.wrightsock.co.nz](http://www.wrightsock.co.nz)

#### 6- Thorlos Trekking \$49.90

For extended trekking in all climates, thick cushioning in ball and heel, moderate cushioning at instep and arch, stretch yarns in the arch. **Composition** 44% Thor-Lon Acrylic, 39% wool, 6% hollow-core polyester, 8% nylon, 3% spandex. [www.thorlos.co.nz](http://www.thorlos.co.nz)

#### 7- Bridgedale Hike Lightweight T2 Merino Performance \$44.99

Hybrid construction with mesh side and underfoot venting panels, T2 anti-compression technology, FusionTech helps wick moisture. Men's and women's sizing. **Composition** 31% merino wool, 37% nylon, 31% Endurofil, 1% Lycra. [e.ampro.co.nz](http://e.ampro.co.nz)

#### 8- Bridgedale Hike Midweight Merino Performance \$42.99

Award-winning three-season sock with Fusion Technology that combines natural and synthetic fibres. Men's and women's sizing. **Composition** 26% new wool, 18% merino wool, 38% nylon, 17% Endurofil, 1% Lycra. [e.ampro.co.nz](http://e.ampro.co.nz)

#### 9- Thorlos Hiking \$39.90

For hiking in moderate climates on varied terrain, thick cushioning in ball and heel, cushioning at instep and arch, stretch yarns in the arch. Men's and women's sizing. **Composition** 87% Thor-Lon Acrylic, 11% nylon, 2% spandex. [www.thorlos.co.nz](http://www.thorlos.co.nz)

#### 10- Earth Sea Sky Trekker Sock \$39.90

Streamlined construction for close fit, extra cushioning in high impact zones, made in New Zealand. **Composition** 70% merino, 24% nylon, 6% elastic. [www.earthseasky.co.nz](http://www.earthseasky.co.nz)





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## 2020'S Best FLEECE

Fleeces are a versatile piece of clothing because they can be used as a base, mid or outer layer depending on the conditions. By **Alistair Hall**

### FABRIC

Fleece jackets are made from polyester fabric and should be anti-pilling.

### ZIPS

The front zips should flow freely and be housed in a 'garage' when done up. A storm flap running behind the zip will help block wind and prevent heat loss. Zippered handwarmer pockets should ensure the zip does not rub against hands.

### HEMS

Drawcord hems are used to seal in warmth on cold days.

### FIT

A loose fit will allow you to wear layers underneath. A tighter-fitting fleece is used as a base or mid-layer.

### POCKETS

Two handwarmer pockets are normal. Some jackets may also have a Napoleon chest pocket.

### WEIGHT

Heavier-weight fleeces are thicker and warmer and suited to very cold conditions. Lighter fleeces are better as a next-to-skin layer or as a lightweight shoulder-season garment or mid-layer.

### WIND RESISTANCE

Colder-weather fleeces may have a windproof membrane to help trap warm air next to your body.

### RAGLAN SLEEVES

A Raglan sleeve is a single piece of fabric that extends from the collar of the jacket to the underarm to create more space for layers and allow greater freedom of movement.



**Macpac Ion \$229.99**

Full-zip, hooded jacket with Polartec Power Grid fabric (60% recycled content, bluesign approved), Polygiene odour control, Raglan sleeve, thumb loops, zipped chest and hand pockets, regular fit. 480g. [www.macpac.co.nz](http://www.macpac.co.nz)

**Rab Nexus Pull-on \$149.95**

Thermic stretch fleece, regular fit, flatlock seams, YKK zips, deep venting zippered chest pocket, double cuff, Raglan sleeves. 270g (m), 225g (w). [www.outfitters.net.nz](http://www.outfitters.net.nz)

**Patagonia Better Sweater Jacket \$229.99**

Mid-weight polyester fleece, Fair Trade certified, 100% recycled materials, full-zip with stand-up collar, Raglan sleeves, zippered left-chest pocket, zippered handwarmer pockets, flat-seam construction. 638g (m), 451g (w). [www.patagonia.com.au](http://www.patagonia.com.au)

**Rab Alpha Flash Jacket \$199.95**

Polartec Alpha fabric, insulates and wicks moisture, slim fit, flexible fleece side panels, Polygiene odour control, YKK zips, zippered chest pocket, chin guard, flatlock seams, half hem drawcord. 273g (m), 201g (w). [www.outfitters.net.nz](http://www.outfitters.net.nz)

**Marmot Rocklin Jacket \$139.95**

A 100-weight fleece with flatlock seams, zippered hand pockets, regular fit. 355g (m), 300g (w). [www.marmotnz.co.nz](http://www.marmotnz.co.nz)





LOWE ALPINE

# 2020'S BEST MOUNTAIN PACKS

Whether you're hitting the ski field or have aspirations for climbing a snowy peak, a dedicated alpine pack will help you achieve your goals. **By Alistair Hall**

## CAPACITY

Ranging from day pack-sized with just enough to carry your essentials for a day of skiing or a summit push, to multi-day-sized packs with the capacity to carry everything you need for serious alpine endeavours.

## FABRIC

The main considerations are weight and abrasion resistance. It's common to see DWR-coated fabrics, usually in the 210-600 Denier range. Look for higher-denier fabrics in areas such as the base and at tool attachment points.

## HARNESS

Weight saving is the name of the game with alpine packs, so expect harnesses to have minimal, or compressed padding. Air-flow-style harnesses aren't necessary as you'll be wearing more clothing.

## HIPBELT

A removable, or fold-away, hipbelt will allow easy access to your climbing harness.

## REMOVABLE FEATURES

Many alpine packs have removable items, such as a foam bivy mat, lid, hipbelt and more. These help users lighten the load when climbing.

## GEAR STORAGE

Mountain packs will have a variety of gear carrying features depending on end use. Climbing packs will require rope straps, pockets to make it easy to carry snow anchors, tent poles or an avalanche probe, ice axe loops and gear loops on the waist belt. Skiing packs will have many of these features, especially the ice axe loops, plus the ability to carry skis or snowboards.

## COMPRESSION

Because mountain packs typically have a narrow profile, they can be top-heavy. Compression straps help create more stability by pulling the load closer to your back and cinching the pack down when it's not at full capacity.



**Exped Whiteout 55 \$599.99**

Single-compartment, roll-top closure, waterproof, abrasion-resistant, slim shape, cushioned backpanel, removable waist strap with dual adjust crush-resistant buckle, ice tool attachment points. **Fabric** Dyneema Composite **Capacity** 55l **Weight** 825g. [www.bivouac.co.nz](http://www.bivouac.co.nz)

**Cactus Outdoor Patrol Pack \$449**

Padded C-Lam harness and waist belt, front shovel pocket, ice axe loops, side pockets for shovel handles and water bottles, internal hydration bladder pocket, avalanche probe pocket, ski tail straps with side release buckle. **Fabric** C-Canvas **Capacity** 45l **Weight** 1390g. [www.cactusoutdoor.co.nz](http://www.cactusoutdoor.co.nz)

**Macpac Sentinel 50 \$449.99**

ActiveX alpine harness, closed-cell foam back panel, removable bivvy mat, hip belt and frame, detachable top lid with pockets, dual ice axe attachments and webbing 'V' loops, haul loops and daisy chains for optional bungee attachment.

**Fabric** Eco AzTec 8oz canvas, Cordura 500D base **Capacity** 50l **Weight** 2100g. [www.macpac.co.nz](http://www.macpac.co.nz)

**Aarn Peak Aspiration \$415**

Air-flow backpanel, Bio-Fit shoulder harness, internal dry-liner, removable extendable lid, snowboard and ski carry system, twin ice axe and hiking pole attachments, snow shovel, helmet and crampon carry system. **Fabric** 500D nylon Kodura, 210D nylon base **Capacity** 50l, 55l, 60L **Weight** 1420g-1600g. [www.aarnpacks.com](http://www.aarnpacks.com)

**Lowe Alpine Halcyon 35:40 \$359.95**

Moulded back panel, rope compression system, pick retainer panel, reinforced ski slots, extendable lid, stiffened weather flap/compression system, lid pocket, zipped side-entry, removable hipbelt with gear loops. **Fabric** 330D Ripstop Nylon/840D Ballistic Nylon **Capacity** 35:40l, 45:50l **Weight** 1310g. [www.outfitters.net.nz](http://www.outfitters.net.nz)

**Lowe Alpine Uprise 40:50 \$369.95**

HeadLocker ice axe attachment system, daisy chain with haul loop points, pick retaining panel, draw-cord top entry, extendable roll-top closure, upper and lower compression, ski carry system, double thickness base panel, removable spring steel frame and EVA back panel **Fabric** 210D 4 Axis Ripstop Nylon **Capacity** 40:50l, 30:40l **Weight** 1100g. [www.outfitters.net.nz](http://www.outfitters.net.nz)

**Aarn Natural Exhilaration \$295**

Air-flow backpanel, adjustable back length, top opening, roll-top closure, water-resistant dry-liner, front compression, two ice axe and two hiking pole attachments, side ski straps, dual-adjust hipbelt.

**Fabric** 500D nylon Kodura, 210 nylon ripstop base **Capacity** 33L, 36l **Weight** 1070g-1245g. [www.aarnpacks.com](http://www.aarnpacks.com)

**Macpac NZAT Summit 24 \$199.99**

Dual ice axe attachments and 'V' loops, zip-opening, removable foam back panel doubles as an insulated seat, top zip pocket with internal clip, sternum strap with whistle, daisy chain loop attachments, removable webbing hip belt. **Fabric** Eco AzTec 8oz canvas **Capacity** 24l **Weight** 710g. [www.macpac.co.nz](http://www.macpac.co.nz)





# FOUR SEASON BOOTS

Alpine boots are required by those whose adventures take them well and truly above the snow line.  
By **Alistair Hall**

## WARMTH

It's essential the boot is able to keep feet warm for prolonged periods above the snowline. Warmth is achieved through a combination of insulation, upper material and a waterproof/breathable lining.

## UPPERS

Some boots have one-piece leather uppers but there are also multi-panel synthetic/leather options. The thickness of the upper should be between 2-3mm.

## FIT

Perfection is crucial – these boots are so stiff, pressure points will not go away with use. Ensure enough wriggle room to keep blood flowing to the toes – helpful to prevent frost-nip. The heel needs to be secure.

## STIFFNESS

The shank is commonly made from nylon, fibreglass or Kevlar and has little or no flex over the length or width of the boot. This provides a stable platform in rugged terrain and while climbing, but will make the boots difficult to use on flat terrain.

## CRAMPON COMPATIBILITY

If the boot flexes lengthways or sideways, a flexible crampon with straps front and back should be used. Technical boots sometimes have a welt at the front for crampons with front and back clips.

## RAND

A full rand running around the base of the upper protects the boot from ice, scree and moraine.



### LOWA Alpine Expert GTX \$999

**Use** Alpine all-rounder for heavy backpacking and climbing **Upper** Mountaineering split leather/microfiber **Construction** Gore-Tex lining, 400g Primaloft insulation, board-lasted and resoleable, X-lacing stud holds tongue in position, Lowa Flex, stabiliser, DuraPU midsole, full rand, two-zone lacing system, automatic crampon compatible. **Outsole** Vibram Alp Trac Ice **Weight** 1740g. [www.lowa.co.nz](http://www.lowa.co.nz)



### Scarpa Mont Blanc Pro GTX \$899.99

**Use** Alpine **Upper** 3mm suede Perwanger leather with fabric **Construction** Low-volume fit over the instep for freedom of movement, stretch Gore-Tex lining with integrated cuff gaiter, polyester fibre insulated insoles, polyurethane midsoles, nylon shank, full rand, resoleable, automatic and semi-automatic crampon compatible **Outsole** Vibram **Weight** 1800g (m), 1560g (w). [www.bivouac.co.nz](http://www.bivouac.co.nz)



### LOWA Cevedale Evo GTX \$799

**Use** Alpine all-rounder **Upper** Mountaineering split leather/microfiber **Construction** Gore-Tex lining, board-lasted and resoleable, Lowa Flex, X-lacing stud holds tongue in position, stabiliser, DuraPU midsole, full rand, two-zone lacing system, Crampon compatible. **Outsole** Vibram Scalatore Evo **Weight** 1600g [www.lowa.co.nz](http://www.lowa.co.nz)



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# SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT ON HILLARY

Richard Riddiford discusses his documentary, *Before Everest*, with **Alistair Hall**

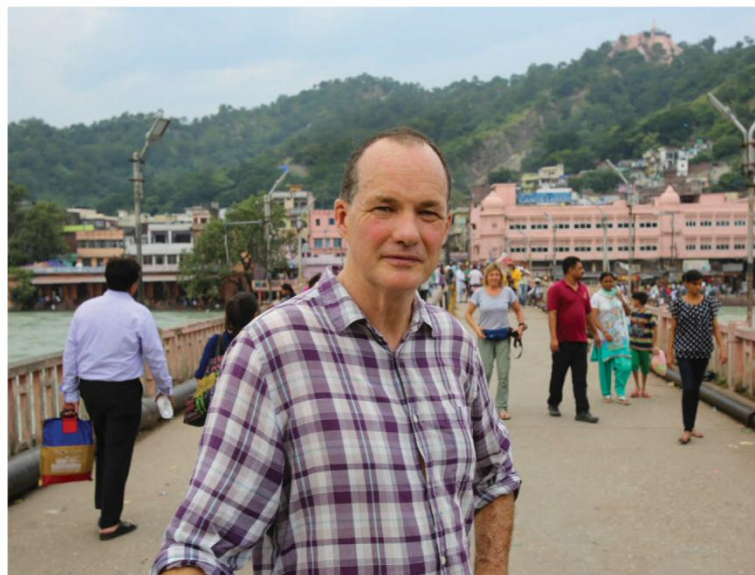
**IN HIS** last autobiography, Sir Edmund Hillary wrote of fellow mountaineer Earle Riddiford: 'I'd never share a rope with him'. It's perhaps the most damning thing one climber can say about another and the slur prompted Riddiford's children, documentary maker Richard and his sister Anna, to ask: 'What do you do when the man on the \$5 note disparages your father?' Their film, *Before Everest*, traces the origins of the slur to divisions that developed during New Zealand's first expedition to the Himalayas in 1951 which Riddiford organised and invited Hillary to join.

**You started making the film in 2000. Why did it take so long to finish?**

It was difficult because we didn't want it to come across as a carping film about Hillary. We wanted it to be a celebration of my father's journey. And yes, it's Edmund Hillary, that was a difficult subject to traverse. My father's old climbing group were not keen to be seen to be negative about that story.

**Hillary is shown to be not that generous when it came to acknowledging other people's contributions and perhaps this is why he made those remarks about Earle. Do you feel you got to the truth of Hillary's comments?**

I think we did. In the beginning, we were worried about what it was [that led Hillary to disparage Earle], whether it was some terrible thing and where we could go with that. But about halfway through the story we finally got to the point where it's actually not really about my father. Hillary's remark is more about him than my father. That was a good realisation to have.



Richard Riddiford in India, where he retraced his father's 1951 expedition to Murkut Parbat

**How do you think the film will be received by New Zealanders?**

Most people are conflicted and cynical about politicians, journalists and most public figures but Hillary is someone we can unreservedly be proud of, so I suppose some people won't be happy we are calling into question what happened. But as I say, we are not trying to be negative or derogatory about Hillary in any way, it's just putting the record straight in terms of what happened, how those events [in 1951] unfolded and trying to give that story a place in history.

**HILLARY'S REMARK IS MORE ABOUT HIM THAN MY FATHER. THAT WAS A GOOD REALISATION.**

**Has your opinion of Hillary changed through the process of making the documentary?**

No, and we never sought to take anything away from Hillary. He was an extraordinary human being who created such a legacy for New Zealand but we did want to put the story straight. If my father hadn't organised the 1951 expedition, there's no way Hillary would have got on the British expedition in 1953.


**You make no bones about the fact that you disliked your father. Why was your relationship so fractious?**

Often mountaineers are driven, extremely uncompromising and determined people and my father was no exception. He had many positive points but he was also very difficult because he was so uncompromising to get along with. In a family situation that can make life very difficult.

**By the end of the film, you seem to have more positive feelings towards Earle.**

I think that was part of my journey – to get to the point where I could celebrate what extraordinary things he did do. Even though I began it feeling I really didn't want to go down that track due to my own personal situation of him not being that great and I felt slightly hypocritical that I suddenly turn around after he was dead saying what a great guy he was. Gradually, that evolved into something where we could see what he did achieve and separate it from my own personal feelings and then come out feeling very positive about the whole thing.

**Do you now feel more comfortable with your relationship with your father?**

I think I do. I have grown up children of my own now and it felt great to show them what he did and what is possible and what an extraordinary legacy he created for our family. It is something that they can look up to and be a guide in their life of what you can do. 



**Beyond Everest will be screened at the New Zealand International Film Festival between July 24 and August 2.**



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